



## *Tunis: the Land and the People*

Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg





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## TUNIS

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE





THE HARBOUR OF TUNIS.



# TUNIS

THE CITY AND THE PEOPLE

BY E. CHEVALLIER, M.A., F.R.G.S.



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# TUNIS

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

BY

THE CHEVALIER DE HESSE-WARTEGG,<sup>Emile</sup>



WITH TWENTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

London

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1882

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## PREFACE.

RECENT events in Africa have again directed the eyes of Europe to the small Oriental State, the description of which is the object of this book. As very few works have been written about Tunis, and none descriptive of the present most interesting state of affairs in the Regency, I have complied with repeated requests by publishing the result of my observations there. The archaeological curiosities, in which the country is so rich, I have touched upon very lightly, as they have been repeatedly described, but I have paid all the more attention to its present condition, its towns, districts, and people.

Besides my own experience last year, during a sojourn of several months in the Regency, I have profited largely by consular reports and other communications placed at my disposal by foreign representatives and by the Government of the Bey.

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I trust that the interest of the subject, and my desire to meet what at the present time seems to be a public want, may to some extent excuse the shortcomings of the following pages.

ERNEST V. HESSE-WARTEGG.

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# TUNIS

## THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE.

### *PART I.*

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE REGENCY.

THROUGHOUT the whole length of the northern coast of the Dark Continent there is scarcely a grander or more beautiful gulf than the one on whose shores lie the ruins of Carthage. Little isles with rocks towering high above the blue waves protect it against the raging storms of the open sea yonder, and a chain of picturesque mountains surrounds the dark-blue surface of the water towards the east, whereas westward the banks slope gradually, and only show at a great distance the tops and peaks enveloped in a blue mist—the last spurs of the Atlas. The more our steamer, coming from lovely Sicily, penetrates south, the smoother get the waves before its sharp bow as we gradually approach the distant shores, until after a few hours the end of the gulf rests in a wide closed semicircle before our eyes. Its character and aspect differ so

little from the coasts of Italy and Spain that we can scarcely realise the idea of being at the gates of one of the oldest African empires, or in the neighbourhood of one of her oldest towns.

At last we can distinguish the details of the incomparable beauty of the coast-lines. In the background of the gulf, on one of the dark heights which rise gently before us, lies the old robbers' den, Tunis, the whitest of all African towns, the "Bornous of the Prophet," as the devout Arabian calls it. Already we see the mighty walls which surround it, the solemn menacing "Kasba," the fortified prison of the janizaries, and the numberless domes and minarets which rise from among a sea of white houses. At the foot of this romantic picture, on a flat sandbank dividing the lake of Bahireh from the gulf, lies the harbour of Tunis, Goletta, the limit of our travels for the present. On both sides the most charming residences cling to the coast for miles, and seen from afar these houses, which beam in the radiance of an African sun, appear like doves bathing in shallow water. Every corner, every projection of the broken and wild zigzag coast is occupied by one of these villas, to which are generally attached large pleasure-gardens, orangeries and olive groves. Here and there the high soaring date-tree —this truest token of Africa—hovers over all.

In the midst of this picturesque landscape on the coast rise two bare melancholy-looking mounds or tombs ; one marking the ruins of Carthage, the other the sepulchre of Saint Lewis, King of France. Carthage contended for the empire of the world with her mightiest contemporary

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—Rome—and after a series of bloody wars was conquered and destroyed. Lewis, and with him Christendom, shared the same fate on African soil in the struggle against Islam.

Tunis, grown out of the ashes of the Roman colony, received its autonomy only with Islam. In the year A.D. 644 Arabian tribes penetrated from the East and overran the whole of Western Africa, conquered the maritime territories of the Mediterranean, and even invaded and subdued Spain. These fanatics destroyed all evidences of Christian culture, overthrew their temples, and with the fragments built their own palaces and mosques. The land was then divided into smaller Mohammedan States, and in this way originated Kairwan, which had to pay tribute to the Caliphs of Bagdad, and of which Tunis was chosen capital. When at last, after many wars, Ferdinand the Catholic succeeded 400 years ago in driving the Moors out of Spain, and even conquered them in Africa, they invoked the protection of the Turkish Empire, then in the zenith of its power—and from that time dates the supreme rule of the Sultan of Constantinople over Mohammedan Western Africa.

For centuries the history of Tunis has been an uninterrupted series of struggles, wars, palace intrigues, murderous deeds, and piratical cruises. From 1673, when the Dey Hadshi Mohamed Menteshali was deposed by the Bey of the Janizaries, until 1705 lasted the struggle between the princes nominated by the Turks—the Deys—and the military commanders or Beys, which ended finally in the sway of the latter. Within the period men-

tioned—that is to say, thirty-two years—no fewer than nineteen Deys were deposed, driven away, strangled, or decapitated. Only in 1705 did Hussein Ben Ali, the Bey of the victorious Janizaries, succeed in obtaining from the high Porte, sovereign power over Tunis, and then only under the condition that he would keep the Deys at the head of the ministry as representatives of the Grand-Turk.<sup>1</sup> But in the course of time the Deys were deprived of even these subordinate positions, and long since ceased to take any part in the Government.

The Hussein Ben Ali above mentioned is the founder of the reigning dynasty of to-day ; but, whether under this sway or that of the former Deys, Tunis was always feared and hated in Europe on account of its piracy. From this same beautiful gulf which we just entered, issued in days gone by those cruel and fanatical corsairs, who traversed the seas and were the terror of merchantmen. Tunis became the receptacle of the booty of these robbers, where it was publicly sold in the market-place. Hence the fairy-like magnificence and proverbial riches of Tunis of the past ; hence those palaces, those lovely gardens, the harems abounding with gold, in which European women, often of noble birth, had to serve the voluptuousness of these Moorish robbers.

However, in the beginning of this century the European powers put a stop to this piratical state of affairs, and from that time dates the decay of the Regency, which increased more and more. It was booty, obtained from the foreigner, which enriched the country, not the thrift and industry of its inhabitants. So soon as treasures

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ceased to enter the land to nourish the love of pomp and the dissipation of the Moorish grandees, their old grandeur began to pale. The fairy-like castles fell into ruins ; the gardens, with their delightful flower-beds, their delicious groves, their magnificent kiosks and fountains, became desolate ; the harems, the brilliant festivities, the luxuries, all disappeared, leaving scarcely a trace behind. The princes of the land alone had the power to feed their languishing resources by extortion and robbery of their subjects, which only hastened the ruin of the people itself. The Tunis we visit to-day is scarcely a shadow of what it was at the beginning of this century. Only the people have remained the same, and they have preserved the primitive originality of their customs and usages from the constant hostility they live in with the surrounding tribes. In Tunis we still see, therefore, a part of the purely genuine Orient, a bulwark of the Middle Ages reaching dark and threatening into modern times. The French occupation has only now battered a breach, and her influence may in time succeed, perhaps, in bringing back to the Regency the old prosperity which it enjoyed many centuries ago when still a Roman province.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE BORNOUS OF THE PROPHET.

"BORNOUS of the Prophet" is the name which the faithful give to the capital of Tunis. With a mind truly Eastern they fancy to see in the form of the town which gently rises towards a hill the shape of an extended bornous, of which Kasba, the citadel, situated on the top, is said to be the hood. As the Mohammedan connects everything with his religion and its founder, this bornous could only be the bornous of the Prophet.

The town extends on the east side of a narrow strip of land, which separates two large salt lakes. Of these latter the eastern one is El Bahireh (so rich in flamingoes and pelicans), which, near Goletta in the east, is directly connected with the Gulf of Carthage, and through this with the Mediterranean. The western lake, called Sebeha-el-Sedchum, is scarcely more than a morass, dry for several months of the year, while filled with salt water during winter, and it is surrounded to a great extent by high, picturesque mountain-chains. To the north of this morass is situated the Manoubia, a town of villas, and the quarter of the Tunisian grandes, as well as the Bardo, the official residence of the Bey of Tunis.

The narrow space on the above-mentioned strip of land was the cause of the town not extending evenly on all sides, and of the two suburbs north and south only developing themselves under the walls of the old town, enclosing the "city" like two large semicircles. These two suburbs, called *Tigina* Bab-el-Dehesira and Bab-el-Suika, were again surrounded by the Turks with high thick walls, so that double gates must be passed before an entry can be effected into the heart of Tunis. Only on the eastern side does the fortified wall of the inner town come into the same line as the outer wall, and here is the sea-gate, so well known to the visitors of Tunis, before which the European quarter extends, and which is called Bab-el-Bahireh.



There are few Eastern towns which offer a truer or a more genuine picture of Mohammedan life than Tunis. The fanaticism of the inhabitants, the constant enmity in which the rulers lived with all the powers of the Mediterranean, the strict laws, and the contempt with which the faithful treated every "Christian dog," preserved the town until this day from intermixture with foreign elements ; and though a mighty respect for the European has long since taken the place of official intolerance of former times, still he prefers to take up his residence in one of the new streets before the sea-gate, which have originated in later years. This contributes to maintain pure the character of the old Moorish town.

But this does not become apparent to the visitor at the first blush when he arrives by railway from Goletta, the harbour. He will see at once, in the peculiar railway carriages, constructed with those Egyptian-like verandahs, Tunisian functionaries in European dress, very few turbans, and scarcely a bornous. The railway station where he arrives is European, an Italian carriage awaits him, and the streets through which he passes to his hotel look European too—just because the "Town of the Franks" is entirely separated from the Moorish part. Only when the visitor leaves the street of his hotel, and turns into one of the little side streets, does he behold the Arabian town. The best way to do this is from the "Marina," a little place covered with Italian coffee-houses, and situated inside the above-mentioned sea-gate. From here the five principal streets branch out in all directions, but the widest of these is only just broad enough to let one

carriage pass, whereas the others are even too narrow for foot-passengers, of whom three can barely walk abreast. Still they are the most important medium of communication in Tunis, as through them the different parts of the town are reached, the quarters of the Franks, of the Arabs, and of the Jews, and finally of the Consuls near the Bahireh lake. We make our way through the narrowest and dirtiest of these streets, and a few steps take us into the Jews' quarter. Distinguished as the little Arabian streets are for dirt, they are considerably outdone by the Jewish. The streets are, after every fifty or a hundred steps, blocked by walls or houses, the latter having no numbers, nor the streets names. But the inhabitants find their way notwithstanding, for they leave their houses rarely, and then only to go to the synagogue or to see a friend close by. There are others who do not leave their houses for years, who live and die where they have been born without ever entering the Arabian part or the Marina. After wandering about for a long time, and climbing up the highest houses compass in hand, I succeeded in committing to paper the confused net of narrow streets. It looks more like the much-entwined branches of a coral-tree than like the plan of a town. Imagine, now, this part of the town at night without a street-lamp, without even a light from a shop—of which there are none—the streets lonely, without a creature to be seen; and yet this is the most densely-populated quarter of Tunis.

Not much better is the adjoining Arabian suburb Bab-el-Suika. The streets here are a little broader and

lighter ; the houses have not two or three floors, but only a ground-floor, no windows, and firmly-closed doors. Here and there you pass a mosque, of which Tunis is said to possess no less than five hundred ; you walk past crowded bazaars, barracks, Arabian khans, in which heavily-packed camels and mules press against each other, then again through quiet, silent streets, where now and then a muffled-up woman slips by ; all at once you find yourself in noisy lanes, where you are either pushed about or carried forward, and where you are in danger of being run over by a laden mule, or of getting under the feet of a camel, which, with its bale of goods, takes up the whole breadth of the little street, while slowly and solemnly stalking towards you. There are everywhere corners, passageways, side-streets, and nooks and holes without name or designation. If the wanderer is without a guide he is soon completely lost in this maze, for rarely does a European or Maltese wend his way here whom he could ask for information. He might enter dozens of well-paved streets, which all get gradually narrower and darker, till at last they are closed by either some high house in ruins or by a high gate tightly bolted and barred ! In trying another street we come upon a crowded bazaar, so full of life and commotion, of screams and shouts, that we are glad to leave it again. After having marched for half an hour, only to return again to the same place, we take yet another direction. We are tired at last, and sit down on a large stone in the street, but before having rested two minutes, thumps and blows and stones, thrown by wild-looking Arabs, drive us away again ; we had

inadvertently sat down on the tomb-stone of a saint, and try to escape the rage of the fanatics as fast as possible. Rarely is an open door or window seen in the street ; some of the houses are bedaubed with the most primitive drawings of wild animals, plants, or houses, at which a wild fellow, half-naked, works as we pass ; he jumps at us as if he were mad, and is only kept back with trouble by one of his co-religionists ; it was a saint, which in Tunis is equivalent to a fool. Walking on, we come to wide, open gates, through which we scan spacious courts, with rows of columns, but scarcely do we put our foot on the first step leading there than some Arabs, who linger about on the steps, drive us back with screams, for we have approached a mosque, inaccessible to Europeans. On the wide open spaces we see innumerable camels and horses ; it is market-day. At last we find temporary rest in one of the numerous Arabian coffee-houses ; these are small dark rooms, along the walls of which divans are running with turbaned Moors resting upon them. Their slippers stand before them on the floor. Some of these grave-looking figures drink coffee and smoke their "tshibuk," rarely "nargileh," which has almost disappeared from Tunis ; others crouch on the matting playing draughts or chess. Here we too may rest in peace. The host brings us coffee, hot but thick, and also excellent Tunisian tobacco for a cigarette, all this for three or four "karubs"—one penny !

The farther we move from the centre of the town, the lonelier and the more monotonous get the streets, and the poorer also the inhabitants. Here live labourers, masons,

and other workmen, and in houses fallen into ruin are encamped the Bedouin tribes, who visit the capital to attend its market ; this is also the quarter of the water-carriers, cake-sellers, and the numerous representatives of foreign tribes, the Biskris, the Barbars, etc. ; and here the caravans coming from the inland towns and from the oases find a place. The streets are unpaved, dusty, and at the time of rainfalls impassable, without lamps of any kind, and if they happened to be in Rome or Naples they would be a paradise for assassins and robbers. But here there is no danger of this kind ; rarely a crime of this sort is committed, and if it does happen, the guilt generally lies at the door of a Greek or a Maltese.

To the west of the great mosque Saituna, which is in the centre of the town, lies the fashionable part, between the Turkish fortress Kasba and the said mosque. Already the breadth and cleanliness of the streets leading to it tell us that somebody powerful must have a palace there, for it is a characteristic of Tunis that dirt is only then removed from its centres of traffic when the severe eye of a General, Minister, or Mufti might light upon it. To the Oriental to take a walk is an unknown thing. The rich drive out in their carriages only to visit each other or to attend the audiences of the Bey, whereas merchants, owners of bazaars, and people in general only frequent the streets leading to the bazaars, and rarely deviate from the shortest way. When the day's work is done, they return to their houses, and do not appear till early the following morning. For this reason the municipality only cares to be agreeable to the great and the mighty ; sand is strewn

on their ways, their pavement is kept in order, and the dirt is removed from their streets to be put down again in one of the more distant ones of a poorer quarter.

After the European quarter, the one where the Bey's palace, Dar-el-Bey, is situated is the finest of the town. To reach the latter after leaving the former we had to pass the narrow but always lively lanes of the bazaar, which gets finer and more elegant as we approach nearer to the Dar-el-Bey. After walking through the Suk-el-Bey (the bazaar of the Bey), we see through a high gate a large place of which the centre forms a well-kept garden, planted with almond and palm trees. Two sides of this square are taken up by the high stone arches of the new bazaar, Khereddin, over which a charming little mosque is raised, one of the prettiest in Tunis, covered with lovely marble sculptures, and an hexagonal minaret of yellow sand-stone. On the third side of the square we see the dark, imposing walls of the old prison fortress, the Kasba, dating from the reign of the Turks, and the fourth shows us the stately front of Dar-el-Bey, at the gate of which a couple of ragged infantry soldiers are idling about, occupied either with knitting or basket-making.

Though the Kasba is in ruins, you cannot enter it without an order from the Ministry. A division of soldiers still keeps guard at its gate, flanked by well-fortified towers. What for? If every ruin of Tunis was to have a military guard, a whole army would be required. The inside of this fortification, which was battered down in 1811, is only a large heap of ruins, and only a small mosque with pretty stucco-ornamented minaret is pre-

served amongst all these ruins, which might be considered the symbol of the Turks' sway in days gone by.

Looked at from the outer walls of the Kasba, proud even in their decay, the grand Moorish town looks majestic in a high degree. Often did I ask my dragoman to accompany me up there, when stretched on the ruins I used to follow the maze of the thousand lanes and passages of which this finest of Moorish towns is composed. Hundreds of snow-white or dark-green domes overlook the sea of houses gently sloping down towards El Bahireh, and slender minarets tower over it all. Here and there the wilderness of flat roofs is interrupted by a few palm-trees, and lower down near the marshy shores of the lake some foliage from the gardens of the Consuls terminates the precincts of the city. Only the north-eastern part of Tunis is uninterrupted in its uniformity by any minarets; the houses here are smaller and closer together; no domes of mosques or sepulchral monuments are to be seen, not even the top of a tree stands forth. It is the Jews' quarter of Tunis.

The grandest structures are, as already mentioned, in the upper part of the town, near the Dar-el-Bey. Here are still found the palaces of centuries ago, desolate indeed, but still magnificent. Towards the street bare and unsightly, we see their splendour only by entering their courts. I found many houses in which the colonnades were marble monoliths with splendid capitals, evidently taken from that great quarry which lies in the immediate neighbourhood, where the building stones are ready cut, and beautifully ornamented, and where there is no dearth of

them—Carthage. This ancient town was such a fruitful field for the Tunisians that in every second house are found Roman stones with inscriptions or sculptures, parts of columns and capitals. If Tunis were destroyed, her ruins would be the ruins of Carthage !

To describe the street-life of Tunis, to paint the forms and types which press against each other here, is perhaps the most difficult task which presents itself to the traveller. To depict amongst the thousands of wayfarers the different races, clans, occupations, and degrees ; to explain their tokens and characteristics, to describe their costumes and manners, would alone take up several chapters. Only after the study of weeks or even months does the attentive observer succeed in bringing method into this confusion of nations.

The majority are, of course, Moors, with white, sometimes yellow, flowered turbans, always carefully wound, with short embroidered jackets, and wide trousers full of folds, with a coloured sash round the body. Sometimes they throw a light cloak of thin silk round their shoulders ; their feet, covered with the whitest of stockings, are put into slippers of red or yellow leather ; their handkerchief, tied by a corner to their cloak, hangs in front ; a rose behind the right ear and a cane with silver button completes this dress.

Now and then you meet Moors with red turbans, the sign of the Hadchis or Mecca pilgrims ; or others with green turbans, the sign of the descendants of the Prophet, the so-called Shereefs ; others wear their white turbans in closer folds, the sign of the Kadis ; these latter often wear

two or three pairs of shoes, in which they shuffle slowly along. The Jews are only distinguished from the Moors by their dark-blue or black turbans, and altogether by the darker colours of their dress, which used to be obligatory, and to which they kept after liberty of dress was granted them ; the Bedouin is wrapped up completely in his white but dirty bornous with its hood.

Women are rarely seen in the streets, except the Bedouin and Kabyle women, who are covered with blue shawls, and show themselves without veils ; the Jewesses, with their tight trousers, made of white linen, and their light-coloured chemises ; the Moorish women, enveloped entirely in white shawls ; negresses, women from Malta and Greece. It is a chaos of nations, costumes, grades and classes, which can only be set out in proper colours in the following chapters. And all these, houses, mosques, populace, are inclosed by the "Bornous of the Prophet !" Shall we succeed in lifting this cloak ?



### CHAPTER III

#### MOHAMED ES SADOCK PASHA BEY.

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F course there is no doubt that until now the dynasty of the Husseinites has not shown itself either very liberal or very accessible to European influence. The Court history or me-

moirs which an African Dumas might write in future of the rulers of Tunis, will not differ much from the

*Memoirs of the Sanson Family.* About two-thirds of the members of the dynasty have, during the two hundred years of their existence, perished by a violent death. Up to the beginning of this century one murdered the other, or persons who put themselves at the head of an insurrection lynched the Regent or the royal princes either from jealousy or to put themselves at the head of the Government. It was managed like the "pronunciamenti" for the last hundred years in Mexico.

Only since Mahmoud Bey ascended the throne in 1814—of course, also through the murder of his predecessor and his two sons—did the slaughter cease; and though the series of interesting little Court stories did not cease with it, still everything was more quiet and respectable. It was for their own good that Mahmoud and his successor showed themselves more accessible to European influence. While the neighbouring Beys of Algiers and Constantine resisted the French steadily, and had their states confiscated, besides being driven out of their country for a punishment, the Beys of Tunis abstained, against the will of their subjects, from showing any open hostility towards the mighty conqueror, and while they accepted the reforms dictated by Europe, they escaped the fate of their neighbours.

But in one respect the Husseinites remained true to themselves and to the qualities of an Oriental ruler—namely, in the love of pomp, and in the lavishness of their hospitality and munificence. The unheard-of luxury displayed by Achmet Bey when visiting Louis Philippe in 1846 is remembered in France to this day.

Never did Paris behold before larger brilliants or costlier jewels of so many different kinds, and only the visit of the Shah of Persia and of the Sultan during the exhibition of 1867 dimmed to a certain extent the recollection of the first visit of an Oriental ruler in civilised Europe.

The liberal and high-minded Achmet was followed by his dissipated cousin Mohamed, who is only mentioned here because of a European innovation he introduced into his state—though not the most desirable one—namely, a national debt. He only reigned four years, but the people remember his exorbitant taxes and his avarice as well as if he had ruled half a century. He had a decided predilection for mechanics, for the fine arts and literature, but without ever importing a machine, or ever buying a properly-painted picture, and without allowing a printing press to be established for either book or newspaper. Roving literates, bad painters, etc., found with him the most liberal support and highest honours; but as the populace of Tunis does not consist entirely of literates and painters, his memory amongst the people is not the best.

The Bey reigning at present, Mohamed es Sadock, is the second son of Achmet Bey, who died in 1856. A fanatical priest, called Ismail Sufi, educated both him and his brother and predecessor. This priest hated European culture and civilisation most cordially, and resisted, therefore, with all his power the intentions of Achmet Bey, who wished to have his sons instructed in the French language, and in the history and geography of the European

states. When, therefore, Mohamed es Sadock ascended the throne of Tunis on the 23d September 1859 not much was to be expected from his wisdom. However, he was not averse to European influences, and he kept up many arrangements copied from the households of European princes which had been introduced by Achmet Bey, especially those which related to externals, such as the way of living.

"Orient and occident can no longer be separated." It is difficult here to find out where the Oriental ceases and where the European begins. The machinery of administration, the army and navy, the Court of the Bey itself, as far as it does not concern the female part, are in their aspect half European. With one single exception, the royal princes wear European dress, dark coats, light trousers, and black neckties. The only sign of distinction of the Oriental, or rather of the Mohamedan is the "shachia," the red fez, without which none of the faithful can do as yet. The Bey himself wears the uniform of a Tunisian General, a dark coat with gold braid and heavy epaulets, red trousers with gold lace, the shachia, on which is fastened a clasp of gold set in jewels which represent the arms of the Husseinites; and finally he carries, on golden hangings, a scimitar with a costly hilt set in splendid jewels. When in full dress—on the last day of the Rhamadan, for instance, or when he receives newly-accredited ambassadors—the Bey wears the decorations of about thirty grand crosses, especially the Golden Fleece, the English Order of the Bath, the Star of the Legion d'Honneur, the Austrian Order of

Stephan, and the Order of his own house. One of the first institutions which the Orient adapted was certainly this one of the orders—a creation of modern times, both in Asia and Africa, and most welcome to the Orientals, so fond of outward show. In his own State the Bey of Tunis has introduced the "Order of Glory" (*Nishan Istikar*), worn to-day by the first monarchs of Europe.

There are, besides this one, three other Tunisian decorations which rank before the "Order of Glory," but they are only given to Mohammedans, or at least natives who are in the service of the *Mushir*. These orders, neither entered in the Red Book of Tunis nor in the *Almanac de Gotha*, are the Husseinitish family order, worn round the neck and set in brilliants; the Order del Ahed, only consisting of brilliants; and the Order del Ahed el Aman.

The Ministers and other civil functionaries in the capital also wear the military uniform only. There is no "Excellency" in Tunis, and the title of "General" takes the place of it. Only the First Minister or Grand Vizier is an exception, and he is called "Excellency." The provincial functionaries, as well as the Church dignitaries, all still wear the picturesque Arabian dress with broadly-folded turban, light-coloured wide trousers, snow-white stockings, and bornous. In the belt a pair of pistols are carried, with a silver top beautifully chased, as well as a costly dagger. But even here the Arabian dress is disappearing more and more, and only the Muftis, Cadis, and Caliphs, and all those who have direct communication with the lower classes, and must carry the distinction

of their office and dignity on their turban, have preserved the original costume.

The heir presumptive to the throne, Sidi-Ali Bey, brother of the reigning Mushir, a man of stately appearance, with a white beard trimmed in the Turkish fashion, has also kept to the Arabian dress ; but he is scarcely ever seen. It is an Oriental custom to ignore the heir apparent of the sovereign completely. No Minister or officer of State is allowed ever to visit or otherwise communicate with him ; he would have to pay for it by banishment or the loss of his place. Neither are the representatives of foreign sovereigns allowed to visit him ; he is personally unknown to them. It is considered here high treason, and in the case of the Consuls a great want of consideration towards the Bey, to pay any attention whatever to his successor, as this would be taken for an allusion to the vanity of the earthly power of the Regent and his eventual death. Sidi-Ali Bey resides with his family and his harem, containing about three hundred women, in a splendid palace at Marsa, a place near the capital, and comes only once a week to the residence of the Bey, to do homage together with the other princes and the State functionaries.

The immediate circle of the Bey of Tunis is a very large one ; for the whole machinery of administration—ministers, aide-de-camps, the local authorities, etc.—all follow the person of the monarch wherever he goes. Fortunately, his travels are limited : he leaves his palace of Bardo once a year to go to the capital, and from there he goes either to Goletta, where he spends the summer in

a little castle at the seaside near the ruins of Carthage, or to the watering-place, Hamman-en-Lif, where he possesses an enormous palace, and takes the hot mineral baths, which are famous. The Grand Vizier, Mustapha Ben Ismail, is his constant companion ; and before the French occupation took place he was the mightiest man in the State, of greater influence and power than the Bey himself, as he directed public affairs, and his directions were only submitted to the Bey for confirmation. The Grand Vizier is present at all audiences which the Bey grants to his subjects, or to the Ambassadors and Consuls at his Court, and the Regent never communicates with his subjects without asking his Minister's opinion. Mustapha Ben Ismail is the first native Tunisian who holds this high office. All his predecessors were of Turkish or Greek race. Mustapha Ben Ismail Chasnadar (Chasnadar is the Arabian name for treasurer) does not come of a family of high standing, and in his early youth he was waiter or barber ; but he was a handsome boy, and when on the feast of Beyram he passed the windows of Dar-el-Bey, the town residence of the Mushir, the latter's attention was roused. The Bey was always very fond of children, though he has none of his own ; he adopted little Mustapha, had him educated, and got to like him so much that he gave him the title of "the son of the Bey," and did not part with him again. For years Mustapha has been allowed to sleep in the Bey's bed-room. At the early age of twenty-five he was nominated General and Commander of the Body-Guard, and later as Keeper of the Great Seal and Minister of Marine.

He was, after the fall of the wise and mighty Chasnadar, Cheir-ed-Din, initiated in the management of the affairs of the State as Prime Minister by Mohamed Chasnadar, who then was Minister *ad interim*. At last he was actually called to this highest position, which he still holds to the greatest detriment of the country.

Amongst the incredible intrigues, calumnies, and persecutions to which the dignitaries at an Oriental Court are exposed, and recognising the highly perilous and insecure position of a Prime Minister, entirely dependent as he is on the caprices of the Bey, it was not to be wondered at that Mustapha, as soon as he was appointed Chasnadar, banished and got rid of all officials and functionaries round the Bey, in whose stead he put his own relations and devoted friends. To be safe in his own position, he could not suffer any ambitious rivals near him. To avoid palace revolutions, he deposed the Bash-Chamba (Grand Marshal of the Palace), who was the brother of the favourite and Bash-Chamba of Sidi-Ali Bey, and in his place he put his own brother-in-law. At first it was not believed that Mustapha would remain Prime Minister long ; but this was a mistake. He balances himself cleverly between the Bey and the here all-powerful French Ambassador, distributing favours amongst those from whom he has expectations, and making many friends through his amiability. The impression he made on me when I first saw him was a favourable one. I visited him together with the representative of a European power at his office in Goletta, the seaport of Tunis, which was the seat of the Government at

the time because of the presence of the Bey there. The palace is a vast building of one floor, with large windows and green Venetian blinds. It is built in the Italian style, and situated on an extensive place near the sea-coast. Round it were grouped, in picturesque style, the tents of the Bey's irregular body-guard of Bedouins ; the horses, saddled and equipped, stood round fastened to pickets, while the guards, little minding us, lay stretched in the tents, decked out in their becoming garments, with pistols and daggers in their belts. I wished to look at the beautifully-chased hilts of their weapons, but they refused, and still less would they remove their daggers from the sheath. At the entrance of the palace stood a few Bedouins and Jews awaiting the district judge, who was to decide a case between them. The large hall was crowded with Tunisian civil and military functionaries. A broad staircase leads to the first floor, where we took a seat in the office of General Bakush, one of the directors of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs,<sup>1</sup> while waiting the Prime Minister's arrival. There was a deafening noise below, and a confused buzzing of voices was heard, which reminded me of the public sales in Oriental bazaars. In the wide hall, into which all the offices opened, aides-de-camp and clerks walked to and fro ; most of these in plain clothes, the sign of distinction of their official position being a small brass plate attached to their red caps. The official language is of course Tunisian-Arabic, very different from the Turkish or Egyptian. There seem to be no archives

<sup>1</sup> In the meanwhile General Bakush has been deposed and made Governor of Susa.

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of the State and no library—at least we saw neither in the whole building. As long as documents are required they are kept in the official residence of the Bey, but they disappear in the course of time. Hereditary nobility, bureaucracy, or merit, etc., do not exist. Talents, knowledge, high birth, are of no value ; the jealous, ignorant despots suppress them as much as possible, lest they should endanger their own position. All the officials, directors, ministers, etc., are taken from the lowest positions, from the inferior classes, to fill the higher functions. Nobody ever knows whether the Bedouin he meets in the street to-day may not be an influential man to-morrow ; and this is the reason why the spirit of caste, or pride, is unknown in Tunis. If subordinates kiss the hands of some functionaries or of rich people, which they do sometimes in the streets and elsewhere, this is only a sort of salutation—intercourse itself is quite free and unconstrained. There prevails an almost republican equality amongst the people up to the highest, most surprising to any one who is not acquainted with local circumstances. As mentioned before, the Prime Minister, with the pompous title of "Son of the Bey," was when a boy an assistant to a barber ; General Bakush, the son of a slave, was up to his twentieth year a commission agent. The Moors, however, possess a marvellous skill in fitting themselves for these higher positions, and also in behaving conformably. The best example here is the Grand Vizier himself. He arrived in a splendidly-appointed carriage, drawn by two beautiful mules. Three aides-de-camp rode before the carriage, also on mules, while a number of guards followed. The Minister

entered amidst deep silence, followed by a brilliant suite, and ascended the staircase leading to his office, while the functionaries kissed his hands with reverence. Immediately after we were led into a large room furnished with European luxury, where the Premier received us. He is a handsome young man, with decidedly Oriental and somewhat effeminate features ; his manner is kind and obliging, and his conversation betrays sharpness and a clear judgment. Mustapha Ben Ismail is a crafty and avaricious intriguer. During the three years he has been at the head of affairs he has succeeded in scraping together millions of piastres ; his greatest pleasure are decorations and brilliants, and of the latter he is said to possess an enormous quantity. He is well aware of the insecurity of his position, and of the dangers to which his large fortune is exposed if he should fall ; he therefore has taken all possible precautions. He has entered his name on the list of the French Embassy, and by this act he has put himself outside Tunisian jurisdiction. His avarice and also his native simplicity are illustrated by many drastic examples. General Mohamed Bakush had a large house built on the Marina, the most beautiful street of Tunis in the European quarter. The Chasnadar heard this, looked at the house, and said to Bakush : "Sidi, I like your house, give it to me !" "Siatik essacha !" (Much good may it do you), answered Bakush, "but you see the house is not ready ; I will have it finished first !" The Chasnadar was satisfied, and Bakush hastened to put himself at once under French protection, and so carry on the structure sufficiently to make it inhabitable without finishing it. And his Excellency the Prime

Minister has been waiting a long time for the house of the chief of his Cabinet.

While I stayed in Mater, a small provincial town about a day's journey from Tunis, I witnessed another amusing incident which illustrates both the Prime Minister's greediness, and also the wonderful administration of justice in Tunis. The Caid of Mater had fallen in disgrace and was deposed. The Chasnadar, who understands equally well how to drain the rich and the poor of his province, had asked for certain contributions of which the Caid refused to pay the last, which amounted to 40,000 piastres. The Minister wanted money. He knew the Caid possessed immense sums obtained in an unlawful manner. So he deposed and locked him up. In the meanwhile two Bedouin chiefs were summoned from the mountains of his province, and they had to testify for a consideration, that the Caid had cheated them out of 40,000 piastres. He was sentenced to pay this sum in consequence. To reward their love of truth the faithful Bedouins got a gold piece each, and Sidi Mustapha pocketed the thousands.

I should not like to say the Caid of Mater was wronged by this proceeding. On the contrary, his involuntary contribution was a proof of his great riches. In Europe a costly sensational process would have been necessary to convict the official.

The Bey himself is an amiable, good-natured prince, and when, in some of his Oriental dominions, the affairs of State are managed in rather an African way, it is not entirely his fault. The direction of the financial affairs of this land has been for years in the hands of a European

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commission, to whom he has transferred nearly all the revenues of the State, to pay the debts of his predecessors. The one or two millions which he keeps yearly are quite sufficient for his modest household. He travelled much in his extensive states as "Bey du Camp"—that is to say, prince of the field or successor to the throne—and since then has always lived in his palace, the Bardo, or during the hot summer months in a charming villa situated near the sea, where I succeeded in seeing him. A ditch and fortified wall lined with large cannons, and bordering on the seaport Goletta, encircles a wide plain, in the middle of which, built out into the sea, stands the princely villa. Sentries and guards in scarlet uniforms richly embroidered with gold, and armed with pistols and scimitars, guard the entries. A long bridge leads over the shallow sea-shore up to the broad verandah of the building, where large ostriches strut about. On the divans of the ante-rooms the aides-de-camp rest, and so does the Bash-Chamba, who announces us for a private audience. Soon a dragoman presents himself and takes us into a luxurious drawing-room, where the Bey sits at the far end on a low seat under a baldachin. He rises at our entrance, walks a few steps towards us, and stretches out his hand. At a certain distance from the throne, seats are put, and we are invited to sit down. The Grand Vizier is already in the room, and stands at the right of the throne. We exchange the prescribed Oriental civilities, which the dragoman, standing in a military attitude between us and the throne, repeats slowly. In the conversation which follows, the Bey shows himself very familiar with European matters,

and directs it to various subjects, having for everything an appropriate, sometimes a witty remark. Mohamed es Sadock is a handsome man, of noble, intelligent appearance, his face surrounded by a gray beard and moustache.

His mode of living is, according to his Master of the Household, very simple. In the morning he takes coffee and biscuits while receiving the reports of his Prime Minister and the Commandant of the Palace, grants audiences, and settles affairs of State. He dines with the Prime Minister alone. The bill of fare consists principally of European dishes, and "kuskussu," without which no Tunisian meal is considered complete, either in palace or hut (it is poultry mixed with a kind of pudding and all sorts of spices, somewhat like the Turkish "pillau"). He drinks at dinner, against the orders of his religion, a glass of Bordeaux, and thinks probably the Prophet would not have forbidden it had he known the generous wine. After dinner he takes a cup of coffee with cognac *à la française*, and indulges then in the sweet "kef," the nap indispensable to every Oriental. In the afternoon at four o'clock he visits his harem, which is housed in a palace of its own, built on the wreck of the former harbour of the war-fleet of Carthage ; but this harem consists of one wife only and a number of attendants and eunuchs. Mohamed es Sadock Pasha Bey—this is his full title—occupies himself in his leisure hours with the reading of Arabian books, and photography, in which he has attained a certain dexterity. He used to be in former times lavish to excess. No European whom he received in audience left him without presents. I myself received a costly enamelled silver clasp and his

portrait from his hand ; he used to present the Consuls with splendid palaces ; the costliest weapons, harnesses, saddles, and suits of armour studded with precious stones were given to European monarchs, and only two years ago he presented the King of Spain with a magnificent Arabian horse, and sent to the Crown Prince of Austria the Grand Cross of the Order of Nishan Iftikar in brilliants, the latter of the value of 25,000 francs. But since Mustapha Ben Ismail has become his Minister, this latter has thought it to his own interest to keep the Bey's liberality within bounds.

Besides the Prime Minister, the Bey's immediate surroundings consist of the three Imams—that is to say, priests—a corps of three adjutant-generals, nine colonels, five majors, three dragomans, two Italian physicians, one corps of irregular horse-guards, which always accompanies the Bey, and a second one—the Hamba—under the command of Aga Sidi Hussein, which forms his palace guard. The highest religious authority is the Sheik-ul-Islam, Sidi Mohamed Muania, whose influence and power is about equal to a cardinal's in strictly Catholic countries. As a proof of this I will cite the case of a victim from the immediate circle of the Bey. Lieutenant-Colonel X., who is also Master of the Household, and whom the Europeans call Signor Naso, thought of annexing the fortune of a man who had left it to the "Chbess," or treasury of the Church. X. was brought before the Ecclesiastical Court, consisting of the Mustis and the Sheik-ul-Islam, which deprived him of all he possessed, including dignities and decorations. He was then placed

in the pillory, where all the passers-by had to spit at him. After this he was banished to the Isle of Dsherba, known for its unwholesome climate. Fortunately for him, Mustapha Ben Ismail, who is distantly related to him, came into power a few months after. He was then recalled at once, to reassume his military and—culinary dignities and functions, which he still discharges with skill.

In all worldly things the Bey is highest and absolute judge. Every Saturday he distributes justice publicly in a large hall at Goletta, or in winter in the Bardo, and his subjects who wish to see him, or who want disputes adjusted between them, may come there to lay their complaints before him. Before the sitting of this Court a levee takes place for Ministers, officers, and officials. All princes, including the brother of the Bey, then gather round him and kiss in succession his right hand.

I was surprised to see the thoroughly Oriental function of pipe-stopper discharged by a European in a dress coat and white necktie. I heard afterwards that this custom dates from the great Hamuda, an ancestor of the Bey's, who is looked upon by the Tunisians just as Harun-al-Rashid was by the Bagdad people. After a glorious reign of thirty-two years, Hamuda died of poisoned tobacco, which a pipe-stopper had put into the "tshibuk."

The Bey hates women, and even his relations with his only wife are very slight. He calls on her once a day at her castle ; but though he stays an hour, he scarcely ever sees her. The hour of his visit is generally the one appointed by Mohammedans for devotions, and on his arrival he generally goes to a small room in the palace to pray.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PALACES OF THE BEY.

THOUGH in regard to size and the number of its inhabitants Tunis is, amongst the towns of Africa, only second to Cairo, and though it has no equal in antiquity or historical reminiscences on that continent, it is entirely void of those grand monuments of Moorish architecture and Moorish splendour which are so numerous in Southern Spain, and even in Algiers and Morocco. In vain do we look for a palace or a mosque which could in the least compare with the buildings of Seville or Tlemsau. We find some pretty mosques, grand palaces, and distributed here and there some costly fragments of Moorish architecture ; but nowhere has the style been preserved pure. The old, beautiful masterpieces of art have fallen into ruins, and nobody heeds ; and in the new buildings the French taste predominates in an obtrusive, unpleasant way which can only be regretted. Through the many Moorish edifices which have been raised in our time in Europe, such as the splendid Turkish baths, synagogues, etc., we obtain quite a foretaste of the East ; but on arriving there, the real home of this architecture, bitter disappointment awaits us. To see it in its full splendour, it is

almost better to-day to stay in Europe instead of going to the Orient. East and West seem to have exchanged tastes. In Europe, Moorish buildings, Oriental carpets, houses with Turkish and Persian furniture ; in the East, and especially in North Africa, European culture clumsily ingrafted on an Oriental stem, and instead of walking on Persian carpets through the midst of those productions of the East which we have seen in dream-like visions, we find Parisian varnish, Parisian patchouli, cheap paper-hangings, and dreadful engravings. The Arabian is just like all other half-civilised people. I once saw a half-naked negro in Hayti with an apron round his loins, wearing a high hat and an old waistcoat. The same kind of incongruity is to be found in North Africa in a hundred similar if not as conspicuous examples. The Arabian, especially if intelligent, who has any communication with Europeans and wishes to affect superiority, will furnish his house in European taste and partly adopt European dress ; his civilisation begins outside without penetrating any farther, but as his Oriental inclinations are sure to come to the surface, the result is a sad want of taste, which meets us at every step throughout Barbary. Of all the large towns of the Orient, Tunis has best preserved its character. Here the coquetry with European articles only begins with the grandees and Jews. The late Achmet Bey, who in 1846 was the first Eastern prince to tread European soil, and who was lionised at the French Court, was the first who, dazzled by the splendour of the Tuilleries, wished to change his capital into a second Paris. His picturesque Arabian troops had to be put into French

uniforms ; his magnificent palaces were turned into Paris residences. From this time dates the pernicious European influence on the external character of this beautiful Moorish town.

The palaces of the reigning Bey are a striking example of this. It is very interesting to stroll through these castles, the bulwarks of Moorish culture and magnificence, and notice the breaches for which Europe is answerable. Amongst the Bey's palaces in and near Tunis the Bardo is the greatest and most important—a Versailles, or rather a Windsor of Tunis, but surpassing both these in size. Situated in an extensive plain, about an hour from the gates of the capital, this thoroughly Oriental palace makes an imposing impression on the visitor. Large façades, terraces, balconies, bow-windows, towers, and verandahs unite in picturesque form, though every wing, almost every floor, a different period and style, and every addition is the legacy of one of the Tunisian rulers who, in the course of centuries, have resided here.

This conglomeration of palaces is surrounded by a deep intrenchment, and forms a kind of fortified town by itself, which looks all the more imposing, as neither house nor tree are to be seen near it.

Provided with the Amr-Bey—that is to say, an order of the Bey—our carriages might have gone right into the palace. We preferred, however, to alight in the front courtyard, a large place, in the middle of which there was a pretty bronze fountain in the Renaissance style, throwing up a large jet of water, which is very refreshing in this dry, dusty neighbourhood. Just opposite to us is the

principal entrance of the Bardo, protected by a massive watch-tower. Behind it, waves on a high flag-staff the particoloured standard of the Bey with its many emblems. To the left, between the tower and the piled-up palace fronts, we see through iron bars a separate yard in which a battery of light cannon is mounted, whose muzzles are directed towards us. This is a present from the King of Italy to the Bey, for the Tunisian army knows no cannon. Between them, sentries walk up and down, knitting in hand, or they crouch on the floor, leaning their guns against the wall. This part is the barracks of the infantry battalion which forms the garrison of the Bardo. It also contains the so-called military school which sends forth the officers of the army, and also the military prison. In a corner of the intrenchment a lonely palm-tree rocks to and fro ; its old, lofty stem betrays the fact that it has survived many a Bey, and seen many a Vizier fall !

We pass between the sentries of the entrance-gate, and have before us a long, straight road, just broad enough for one carriage. Imposing marble palaces rise on the left, built of costly material, partly in the Renaissance, partly in the Oriental style ; their gates are richly embellished, and they have either high windows with green Venetian blinds or projecting convex trellises ; these are the palaces of the princes of the reigning house, and of the Minister, who, according to Oriental custom, must always reside in the immediate neighbourhood of the Regent.

And opposite these magnificent residences, a few steps from their gates, we see a long row of common shops with

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an arcade in front, a true Eastern bazaar for the inhabitants of this town of palaces, whose number amounts to two thousand when the Court of the Bey resides here. At the end of the street, about three hundred steps off, we arrive at several lonely courtyards, surrounded by a high palace. The doors here are small, the windows firmly closed by Venetian blinds and lattices ; they contain the mysterious apartments of the harem. At last we reach the last courtyard ; it takes us to the reception-rooms of the Moorish ruler, and we are allowed to enter here. This is the famous Lion Courtyard, so called from eight rather vicious-looking lions, executed in beautiful marble, and placed on the landing-places of the broad staircases leading to the palace. One side of the courtyard is enclosed by a double row of beautiful arcades. There is no doubt that they belong to the grandest architectural works of art in Tunis. The marble blocks which form the arches are alternately white and black, and rest on splendid columns, monoliths with capitals exquisitely veined—evidently found in the ruins of the third Carthage, and transferred here. What a cheap quarry Carthage was for the Tunisians ! How easy to build palaces from such riches ! And these stony witnesses of Roman culture again carry a vault which is also one of the most magnificent specimens of the Moorish style. The same arabesques of stucco-work which we admire in the Alhambra and in the old mosque of Tlemsau, and which, in the delicacy of their designs and in the correctness of their execution, remind us of the finest lace patterns, form here the ceiling, which you never tire of looking at while following the

numberless tiny fillets entwisted into such an harmonious labyrinth.

The walls of the colonnades and of the spaces opening behind them are up to the ceiling covered with those small glazed tiles, also belonging to Oriental structures,



THE BARDO : VIEW OF THE LION'S COURT.

and which show the cleverness and patience of the workmen in the same way as in the "Noksh Chadid" of the stucco-work. Every one of these little tiles is painted over with delicate ornaments in different colours, although according to the same design ; but if compared with each other, it is seen that no mould has helped the workmen, but that each tile differs from the other in detail,

and that from beginning to end they are the result of arduous, skilful painting by hand. And now think of the entire surface of walls, and what is more, the miles of high corridors in this accumulation of palaces, all covered with such small tiles, and consider what vast amount of labour is here represented.

The other fronts of the Lion Courtyard contain prisons and smaller courts of justice ; the highest tribunal, at the head of which the Bey sits in judgment, is behind, in one of the most beautiful halls of the Orient. We walk through some empty vestibules, and enter a high magnificent hall which is divided into three parts by rows of marble columns ; at the extreme end, on a platform, is the richly-gilt throne of the Bey covered by a baldachin. By the side, red velvet seats are put for the Ministers and Generals. The walls are entirely covered with the costliest marble mosaics of all colours, very well preserved. Along the walls near the ceiling we see Arabian inscriptions—passages from the Koran relating to the administration of justice. But here, as in every modern Oriental structure, however beautiful, there is the commonplace mixed with the sublime. The marble columns here—splendid monoliths—were probably found in Carthage without the requisite capitals, so that Arabian sculptors put the capitals on ; but they chose clumsy pieces of stone, into which they cut half-moons and chiselled cannons !

Now we are led on again by the captain on guard through lonely corridors, empty neglected halls with broken floors and shattered windows, till we reach the

noblest hall in the palace, the throne-room. After what we had seen already, we expected to behold a Moorish hall, and were therefore not a little disappointed to enter one, certainly enormously large and high, but furnished in thorough Parisian style! Instead of the lovely carpets manufactured in Tunis, we found the floor covered with Parisian productions, large-flowered and tasteless; crystal chandeliers hang from the ceilings, French curtains at the windows; and between these long mirrors. The pier-tables before them were covered with Rococco-candelabra and Sèvres vases, and on every table stood also a bronze clock with crooked hands.

On the wall opposite the windows are life-size portraits of European monarchs presented to the Bey, amongst others a splendid Gobelin, representing Louis Philippe. With the exception of a throne and baldachin and some red velvet draperies, the room contains no furniture.

The room next to this is reserved for kissing hands, a proceeding to be gone through before every ceremony, by the princes, ministers, and dignitaries of the Bey, as a sign of submission.

Much more beautiful and splendid than the throne-room is the so-called crystal hall, which is reached after another series of desolate passages, empty apartments, and various staircases. It is smaller than the throne-room, but a Moorish work of true art: the glazed tiles cover both ceiling and walls entirely, and are covered with arabesques of golden bars, just as we have seen it in the stucco-work. The effect is brilliant. A throne and wide divans covered with Oriental materials are the only furniture. Through

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the windows, covered with artistic trellis-work, you look across the landscape on the left as far as Tunis and El Bahireh, the bay of the town ; on the right are the palm groves and orange gardens of Manouba, between which tower the stately palaces and villas of Moorish grandees.

Close by, on the right, stands a long building of one floor, of rather distinguished appearance. It stands in the centre of a garden, and is also surrounded by walls ; this is the real residence of the Bey. He does not like the splendid rooms of the Bardo, and leaves them to the princes and his harem. Only once a week does he appear there, to sit in judgment on his subjects or to receive the Ambassadors and Consuls of the great powers. Then the aspect is changed as by magic. The lonely, deserted places, the many courtyards, the entrances before the Bardo, and the whole street down to the heart of the capital, are teeming with life. Splendid carriages abounding in gold and velvet, drawn by richly-harnessed mules, bring the Moorish nobles. On beautiful, long-tailed horses the chiefs of the Bedouins arrive, well-armed and enveloped in their long white bornouse ; the body-guard of the Bey, in their red uniforms, with their lances and scimitars, march to the music of the Turkish bands ; the Ministers and Generals in splendid uniforms, covered with stars, come with a suite of adjutants and servants, one after the other ; and the whole way is covered with people on horseback, pedestrians and camel-caravans, who all want to reach the Bardo for this one day. At such times the Oriental Court, of which Tunis is the residence, presents a stately picture. But it is only an external

brilliancy, and it cannot deceive the visitor as to the misery reigning inside this Moorish Empire.

In the capital the Bey only possesses one palace, the Dar-el-Bey, distinguished for its magnificent interior. This is situated in the upper part of the town—the Faubourg St. Germains of Tunis—and round it are the palaces of the Tunisian grandees.

While one of the guards at the gate takes our written permission to visit Dar-el-Bey and fetches the commander of the castle, we inspect the outside ; it is also a building of one floor with high windows, extends along the whole square, and is surmounted by a flag-staff. From the simple Italian architecture we are not prepared to find the magnificent arabesques with which the inside is ornamented in a fairy-like manner. The commandant, followed by a number of aides-de-camp, took us first through a high gate into a large court or "patio" encircled by simple arcades, and from there by a broad marble staircase into the first and only floor. Through two large halls, furnished in European style, which, during the short time the Tunisian Constitution lasted, served as Chamber of Deputies and for the Senate respectively, we reached a "patio" with graceful arches, composed of white and black marble blocks, which rest on sixteen white columns of the same material, and support a roof of glass. Round this "patio" are small rooms for the Bey's Ministers and adjutants, again with European furniture, little harmonising with the truly magnificent Moorish decorations on wall and ceiling. Already the round hall of the former

Senate possesses a dome of which the arabesques can be compared, without hesitation, to the most wonderful works of the Moors in Granada and Seville. The circumstance that this dome has been restored only in the present century shows that the traditions of Moorish architecture have been preserved in all their purity, and that we might still expect most beautiful edifices if the pernicious influence of Europe, and the mania of the Tunisian rich for Parisian luxury and Parisian style were not so predominant. And how much more beautiful is this delicate net-work, so fanciful, and yet so regular, than even the most lovely decoration of ceilings in Europe. The more I got absorbed in these arabesques, the more I admired them, the more beautiful did they appear, the more did they seem a misty veil through which I seemed to look into another world. Just as charming and seductive is the ornamentation of the smaller rooms of the "patio;" painted glass tiles with the most beautiful ornamentation, coloured wood mosaic and lovely stucco-work cover here also walls and ceiling, and give us an idea of what charming places these might be if a morbid taste had not replaced Oriental carpets, divans and Moorish tables by Rococco easy-chairs, a lot of gilt clocks and cheap lithographs.

We might easily fancy ourselves at a Parisian hotel on the Boulevard when we enter these apartments; only waiter and chambermaid are wanting. This last suite of rooms is generally offered to foreign princes while staying here; and Prince Charles of Prussia occupied them some years ago. After passing another suite of small Oriental rooms

we arrive at last at a hall which, excepting the floor, is entirely of crystal, and is, with its divans and easy-chairs, half Oriental, half European. In a small side-chamber we see a bed with yellow damask hangings. These two apartments are the Bey's private ones; he spends his days here during the Rhamadan. But at night he always returns to his villa in Manouba, for only once a year does he sleep in this capital, that is on the third night of the Beyram feast.

In summer the ruler of Tunis resides in a charming little villa close by the shore, between the ruins of Carthage, the old Roman colony, and Goletta. Towards Goletta the residence of the Bey is closed in by fortifications and cannons, and the stranger who comes from Europe, and generally lands in Goletta, does not expect to find the Bey's residence inside this modern fortress. Sentries, batteries of cannon, casemates, and piles of bullets have to be passed, and at last the pretty villa is seen with the Bey's standard over it. The arrangements inside and the furniture are of the latest European fashion. The palace of his consort is, on the other hand, furnished in the Oriental style, surrounded by a beautiful garden, and is only a quarter of an hour distant. The reservoirs and ponds in this garden, which is studded with graceful palm and almond trees, were once the harbour of the Carthaginians. This palace also stands close to the shore, and the Princess can, from her rooms, descend direct into the sea.

From Goletta, the lovely gulf, in its grandeur only

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comparable with the Bay of Naples, can be seen in its entire extent, and opposite lies the watering-place, which, like every large place in Tunis, contains a Dar-el-Bey—a castle for the Bey. This palace is also by the sea, and as the Bey stays here several weeks in the year, there is a very good road leading to it. The complex of buildings which belong to the Dar-el-Bey is very extensive, but not beautiful. Colossal walls, bow-windows, galleries, gates, and terraces recall the Bardo, but are yet more desolate. The only charm about it consists in the windows and bow-windows, distributed quite irregularly about the immense front; they are sometimes large, sometimes small, and always locked and provided with close railings, so that a harem might be suspected there; but this is not the case. This giant caravansary stands quite empty when the Bey leaves it, and even the furniture and carpets are removed every year after his departure. This palace is only inhabitable when the Bey and his Court are coming; then all gets lively. But from the day of his departure until the following year it serves cattle for stabling, and gangs of strolling Bedouins for night quarters. The costly ornamented sleeping-chambers are then full of incredible dirt; in the broad corridors and up in the garret-floors heaps of rotten straw lie about. Doors and windows are broken, the walls dirty, the beautiful marble slabs on the floor torn up. And all this notwithstanding that many people are paid to keep the palace in order. Before the Bey arrives the palace is renovated all through; everything gets whitewashed or painted; windows are provided with new shutters, doors with new locks—in one word a stable is

turned into a palace, of course at an enormous cost. How much cheaper and simpler it would be to lock the gates and to put sentries before it! But they follow here, as in all countries once under Turkish rule, the good old custom. It is to be supposed that the Bey knows nothing of the management of his possessions. Before him all is splendour, behind his back—desolate ruin!

This unbounded negligence shows itself most in the provincial castles of the Bey; for instance, in Biserta, Porta Farina, and Zaghnana. These "palaces," much smaller and rather paltry here, are literally heaps of ruins, and the impression they make on Europeans is all the more sad as these ruins are modern, the result of Oriental carelessness, not of old age. The Bey never came but rarely into the provinces, but during the last twenty years has not come at all, so that these "douar" are now scarcely inhabitable. It were well for them if the Bey came every week; they would have to be kept in order then. Besides the above-named palaces, there are in Tunis and its environs several others of colossal dimensions and great beauty. But on inquiry they turn out to be the palaces of former Beys, given by their successors to the foreign Consuls or to Tunisian favourites. According to a Tunisian custom, a reigning Bey must not live in a palace where one of his predecessors died. As, notwithstanding this, none of them had himself transported into the street on death approaching, the consequence is that there are more than a dozen palaces in Tunis to-day which cannot be used by the Beys. Where would this lead to in England or France if for each sovereign a new

Windsor or Versailles had to be built! The saddest example of this modern Vandalism is Mohamedia, once the magnificent residence of Achmet Bey, who had it built about thirty-five years ago at a cost of 10,000,000 francs. This palace, with its secondary buildings and villas for Ministers and dignitaries, was situated two miles out of town, and when Achmet Bey died, the furniture was moved, the floors, glazed tiles, doors and windows, were broken out and dragged to another palace. The heavy marble columns, statues, the curbs of the wells, etc., remained behind with the walls, and he who passes these imposing ruins to-day might think thousands of years have passed over them. The hand of the Arab destroys thus in our day in the midst of peace, as his ancestors, the Vandals, did centuries ago, only in times of war! So much for Oriental culture!

## CHAPTER V.

## THE MUNICIPALITY AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

WHILE wandering through the capital as well as through the rest of the Regency, I asked myself how it could be possible to manage State and capital with the existing local authorities, and what sort of institutions there must be here to keep society in order. It could be easily seen that the authorities were incapable. Law, authority, honesty, and impartiality seemed not to exist. Money is the law-giving force, the executive power in the State, and if matters have remained the same through centuries up to the present day, it is owing to the mightiest moving power in Oriental States—to religion. Religion alone sustains the aged, rotten structure, after being partly answerable for its decay. Whoever wishes to travel to the East cheaply and comfortably, had better read the Koran; it gives a better insight into the manners and customs of the Orientals than long voyages and personal contemplation can do. Religion and religious authorities and societies with their instructions are the principal factors, not only for the individual and families, but for whole communities. Latterly the foreign powers were induced to say a word, through their Consuls in Tunis, in matters

not only concerning the affairs of the State, but also in regard to municipal conditions, they had to help and pull the wheels of the State machine out of the mire, so that



CAKE-SELLER.

it should not sink entirely. The result was that the municipality of this capital of 130,000 inhabitants had to submit to a thorough reform, and its authority got somewhat limited. Then came foreign speculators, who, at

their own risk, undertook to execute works which the civil authorities ought to have undertaken themselves, but which in that case might have waited for centuries—for instance, the lighting of the town. Keeping to the ways of the Middle Ages as the Orient does, the idea of lighting up the town would not have entered their heads. Whoever wanted to go out at night had to take his own lantern, and to this day the whole Arabian town, with the exception of a few principal streets, is wrapt in total darkness, and Europeans have to carry their lanterns, while the European quarter is lit by gas, which was introduced by an English company. Some solitary rich Moors had gas-lamps attached to their houses, but the people know nothing as yet of this innovation.

The same happened with the water. All the town depended till some years ago on the water from the cisterns, which was often dried up during a hot summer, and exposed the people to all sorts of dangers. Now the old enormous waterworks of Carthage still exist, and for centuries the Tunisians could see where fresh spring-water could be found, yet amongst the millions of Mohammedans to not a single one did the idea occur that with little money these waterworks could be got into working order and the town benefited immensely. Again it was reserved for Europeans to convey the Roman sources of Zaguan into Tunis, and to provide the town with excellent drinking-water, which flows now from many wells erected in different streets. Two or three years ago this good work was threatened by neglect, and it required again the interference of the European Consuls, who had large

reservoirs built in the upper town near the Kasba, and also a sort of water-tanks. The architect chose, by-the-by, the well-preserved reservoirs of Carthage for a pattern.

It is the same with cleansing of streets and places,



BREAD-SELLERS.

and with the municipal buildings, etc. Everywhere the Consuls are wanted to keep the town in order, or at least to make it inhabitable from a sanitary point of view.

In a street, clean and well paved, north of the Kasba, there stands amongst old Moorish palaces a small, plain-looking house. A long ante-room, crowded with people, leads to a narrow staircase, at the top of which there are

some rooms mostly empty. In an adjoining "patio" covered with a roof of glass stands a long table with two or three books and some inkstands, at which two officials are working. This building is the mansion-house of Tunis. Here in these empty rooms is the seat of the civil authorities, the residence of the president of the administration and of his officials. Simplicity in all matters of business is certainly a great virtue, but in Tunis this simplicity goes a little too far. The three books which I saw on the above-mentioned table are at the same time the archives of Tunis, for if every piece of furniture were turned inside out, and the whole house demolished, not another piece of paper would be found, not another book, not even a map of the town. It is true that the business and sphere of action of the administrative body is very limited, as there are no municipal institutions and no public buildings to manage, gas and water scarcely exist, not even a fire-brigade. Even the cleansing of the streets is not in the hands of the turbaned mayor. For this purpose a special association exists. Morning and night they send men with carts and, where carts cannot enter, on foot to clean the streets, and as there are no drains whatever, they have enough to do. All possible and impossible dirt is thrown by the inhabitants before their doors into the street. From a tax of six piastres (four francs), which every family has to pay per year to the municipality, this street-cleaning company is paid. There are also commissioners whose duty it is to go from door to door to inspect the cess-pools, which are used in Tunis instead of sewers. If these sinks are

not in a proper state, they have a right to have them cleaned at the cost of the house-owner.

The cost of paving the streets is defrayed from the tax which carriages pay, and which amounts to a revenue of 30,000 to 40,000 piastres yearly. Of course by this, only the streets of the European quarter and two or three of the Arabian parts are meant, as driving is impossible in the others. Before the introduction of this carriage-tax, which concerns principally the Maltese drivers, who have the driving business almost entirely in their hands, the preservation of the streets was incumbent upon the Chbess or mosque funds, which possesses in Tunis enormous riches. This Chbess, superintended by a committee of "Ulemmas," consists partly of ready money, partly of landed property, which latter according to law may never be sold, though, with the permission of the Bey, it is allowed to change them for estates of equal value. But if a saint should happen to be buried there, the ground must never be touched, but must remain in the same state, even if situated in the centre of commercial intercourse or before the palace of the Bey. These estates of the Chbess are one of the greatest hindrances to the free development of the town ; they explain the existence of the innumerable ruins and of the crooked lanes. So long as this law is not altered, Tunis will have neither sewers, straight streets, nor other improvements known to modern towns. The many tombstones and painted sarcophagi, which you see sometimes in the middle of lively streets, belong to this sacred property, and woe to him who touches them ! A Jew who some years ago put his

foot on one of them to lace his shoe was instantly killed by fanatical Mussulmans.

Religious intolerance is altogether one of the chief characteristics of Tunisians. Woe to him who only contemplates a mosque! I myself witnessed a fanatic throw vitriol over a German lady while she was sketching a group of houses, he labouring under the impression that she was drawing a mosque.

There is in Tunis but one hospital; it only holds a hundred people and is therefore quite insufficient; generally poor people only take refuge there, and as the place is really kept well and clean, in which latter quality the Arabs are entirely deficient, every new-comer, however ill, has to submit to a thorough cleansing whether it agrees with him or not. The hospital physicians are mostly Tunisians, graduated in medical colleges in Algiers or even in Paris. The women are housed in a separate part of the building.

The ground-floor is the lunatic asylum of Tunis, where raving madmen are put. As is well known, harmless lunatics are considered saints in all Mohammedan countries, and are under no constraint whatever.

All matters concerning schools in Tunis are almost entirely in the hands of the Ulema and Mustis. Every mosque has a Koran class, in which the Koran is taught to little boys mechanically.

The Arabian university is in the holy town of Kairwan, but nothing else but the Koran is taught there. Kerreddin, however, one of the most intelligent of modern Tunisians, succeeded several years ago in founding an Arabian academy—the College Sadiki—which is maintained by the

confiscated fortune of Mustaph Chasnadar, a former Prime Minister, and father-in-law of Kereddin. The college programme comprises seven annual courses of lectures, and there is such a great number of students that for the next few years there will be no vacancies. Instruction (principally by European professors), dress, excellent board and lodging are all paid for from this fund, and no school in the East can be compared in excellence to the College Sadiki. The subjects taught are the same as in a European gymnasium ; and I found from personal inquiries in the different classes, that the pupils do indeed acquire great knowledge, which will contribute more than anything else to the abolition of prejudices and of religious intolerance in the course of time. By founding this school, Kereddin has shown great wisdom and discernment, and it is only to be regretted that he had to cede the reins of office to the intriguer who is to-day Minister and favourite of the Bey !

## CHAPTER VI.

CURIOSITIES IN CONNECTION WITH THE TUNISIAN  
ARMY AND NAVY.

THE ancient mightiness of this once dreaded piratical State has been broken long since, and while it was yet feared towards the end of the last century by even the strongest states of the Mediterranean, it only excites pity to-day.

My first acquaintance with their heroes I made immediately after my landing in Goletta, the harbour of Tunis. There stood a Tunisian guard before a sentry-box. His dress consisted of a black jacket with red braid, black trousers reaching to the middle of the calf, a red fez with a brass shield, and (probably) a shirt. He wore yellow kid slippers, and by his side, in a leather sheath, dangled a sabre, which had no point, and his gun—leaning against the sentry-box—exhibited a rusty percussion lock. The man himself had a stocking in his hand, which he was knitting. An officer passed him, when he put aside his stocking, took up his gun and presented arms, after which he put it in the corner again, from which proceeding I concluded that the feminine occupation of knitting is allowed him also when on duty. Before the War and

Marine Ministries, the sentries idled about in the same way, and even in the capital before the palace of the Bey the sentries were knitting stockings. The best of it was, that not a single soldier wore stockings. In the streets of the large town you meet here and there patrols; and there are soldiers on guard before the gates of the town, but all are dressed in the same miserable uniform. Not a jacket, not a pair of trousers are sound, and some of their wearing apparel is patched to such an extent that the original colour cannot be discerned. During my first stroll, I chanced to see the sentries relieved. According to Mohammedan custom, the soldiers had their shoes ranged before the arcades of the gate, and sat or laid about on straw mats. Some knitted, some twisted hemp-tows, others mended shoes. One or two horse-soldiers, who could only be distinguished from the others by gaiters and their rusty trailing sabres, leant sleepily against a barrier. Suddenly a blast of trumpets and such a roll of drums were heard in a side street that I thought a whole infantry regiment was coming. But it was only a small procession of soldiers with two officers and about a dozen musicians. The men on guard rose slowly, put aside their knitting and other work, betook themselves to their slippers, and stood up in two rows without a commanding word from the officer. The trumpeters of the new guard turned, put themselves at the head of the retiring troop, and away they went with a noise as if the weal of Tunis depended on these trumpets. When marching, these soldiers make even a more miserable impression, as their shuffling slippers do not allow them to walk properly.

Shoes which fit are detested by Orientals, and as the habits of the country require often that shoes be left behind—for instance, if you enter a room or shop, which you have to do in stockings or barefoot—these warriors, from sergeants downwards, change their shoes into slippers by treading them down at the heels. The officers get over the difficulty by wearing two pairs of boots, of which the one pair represents the stockings.

All these observations I had the opportunity of making while visiting Dar-el-Bey, at that time uninhabited by the ruler. Here also there were a number of soldiers on guard ; one took our "order to view," and went away with it, soon after returning with three officers without arms, a major, and two captains, of whom the former carried a bunch of keys. All three took me through the place themselves. On leaving I wished to shake their hands with thanks, but Karoubi, my dragoman, remarked : "Don't you give them a gratuity ?"

"A gratuity ? To whom ?"

"To the major," said Karoubi innocently.

"A gratuity ? To a major ?" I had scarcely money enough in my pocket to reward a high officer worthily.

"Give him two francs !" said Karoubi again. I put three francs into the major's hand, and looked rather perplexed while I took off my hat. But the major and the two captains accompanied me to the door, and always bowed afterwards whenever they met me.

All these strange events awakened my curiosity as to the position and circumstances of the Tunisian army. Thanks to the intervention of an influential friend, I soon

obtained an "Amr-Bey"—that is, an order from the Bey—which not only opened all barracks and military institutions for my inspection, but also raised me to the dignity of a colonel (*Amir Alay*) *pro tem.* Through this Amr-Bey I soon got an insight into the military system. The mismanagement of it cannot be laid at the door of the Bey, as, according to the curious custom of the East, he has no knowledge of it. The First Minister in Mohammedan states is the real ruler, and his master only hears what he allows him to hear. The Minister is always, and under all circumstances, present at the audiences; if the Minister is ill, the Bey gives none. I mention this so as to put the person of the Bey in the proper light in regard to the mismanagement and depredations of his subjects.

About the organisation of the army little is known. The *Almanac de Gotha* gives us seven regiments of infantry, four of artillery, and a division of cavalry, with a total strength of 20,000 men. According to the information, however, which I got from the Ministry of War in Tunis, there are only five regiments of infantry, and one of artillery. The cavalry is only to be found on paper. In reality it consists of a few colonels and twenty men without horses. The real total number of troops—comprising the whole army—is about two or three thousand men, of whom one thousand are garrisoned in the capital, and the rest in the province.<sup>1</sup>

On the ministerial lists I only found the officers men-

<sup>1</sup> The garrisons of the regular army are those of Tunis, Sfax, Monastir, Susa, Kerman, Gafsa, and Gabes.

tioned, while the total strength of the troops was utterly unknown to them. For this army there are about 100 generals and 1000 officers of all degrees, from a lieutenant of fourteen years (Molass) up to a colonel, who as a rule served the Bey formerly as pages, and did all sorts of services for him, of which the details cannot be recorded here, but for which they got promoted without ever having seen a gun or drum. There is no military school, unless the harem be considered as such. Of the officers emerging therefrom, some remain in the household of the Bey, others are employed in the ministries, and the greatest number are put into the army invested with the same rank to their last day, promotion being very rare.

The pay of this valiant army is equivalent to its services—that is to say, a little more than nothing. All officers as well as the rank and file receive from the Government board and lodging, and are also clothed, and receive besides a nominal pay,<sup>1</sup> which would be sufficient for the modest wants of Orientals if they really got their pay, their board, and their clothes. The proper accounts are handed in no doubt, but the money goes through the hands of so many generals, colonels, and captains, that of the pay nothing remains, of the clothing only rags, and of their board, bread, and bad oil.

<sup>1</sup> According to the lists shown me, the monthly pay is as follows:—The general of division (Ferik) gets 1060 piastres; the major-general (Liwa) 115. The colonel (Amir Alay) 250 piastres; the lieutenant-colonel (Kaimakam) 125, the major about 100, the captain 50, the lieutenant 24, the sergeant-major 12, the sergeant 8, the oubarski 6, and the soldier 5 piastres per month. But the pay is sometimes in arrear for several months, and even sometimes for years, and under the most favourable circumstances it is never paid in full.

Armed with my Amr-Bey, I also paid a visit to the barracks, accompanied by two German cavalry officers, with whom I made several other excursions in the neighbourhood of Tunis. Our visit had been announced to the commanding officer from the Ministry, and when we arrived with our dragomans at the infantry barracks all the soldiers got under arms (as far as there were any arms) to give me the honour due to a colonel. The barracks themselves, situated near the Kasba and adjoining the walls of the town, form such a stately building and are in such good repair that you might think European soldiers live in them. There is room enough for 1500 men. They are built in a square, have only a ground floor, and surround an extensive, well-paved courtyard. In the centre of this latter there is a covered fountain with excellent water, which serves not only for drinking purposes but also for the ablutions prescribed for every prayer. The four sides of the yard are formed by fine Byzantine archways, with broad galleries. Under every arch is the entrance to a long narrow dormitory, of which there are at least 150 with room for twelve to fifteen men, though scarcely half that number is housed here. The commanding officer, who is a colonel, accompanied by a major and some aides-de-camp (who are at the same time the indoor servants and boots of their superiors) went with us over the place. Every dormitory was furnished all round the wall with a wooden bench, without either pillow or mattress, or even linen, the only covering being an old torn cloak ; here and there a rusty sabre or a gun was hanging. The linen and clothes they stood in was all they possessed. Their

uniform of black cloth with red braid, and fez with brass shield, have been mentioned before. In summer they get uniforms of canvas instead of cloth. The distinctions are little stars on the collars, and little brass shields. We also saw the dormitory of the musicians, who had their strange instruments—which are ornamented with horse-tails and little flags!—on the board at their head. The commander assured us that the soldiers were drilled in the yard for an hour daily, and offered to let them perform before us; but we declined, with thanks, having regard for the miserable appearance of these poor fellows. On leaving the barracks the military honours shown us on entering were repeated, and we could see how pleased the officers were to come off the inspection so cheaply.

Our next visit was to the forts, artillery depots, and arsenal. The latter is situated outside the town, on the way to the Bey's castle, and was a castle once itself. We drove through the heavy gates of the town, mounted with cannon, into the open country; then along between the Mohammedan graveyards, and under the majestic arches the old aqueduct of Carthage, till we saw before us the imposing complex of houses forming the arsenal of Tunis. The buildings, situated on two terraces, lying one above the other, are surrounded by a high wall; but the roads leading there, in which even our light carriages penetrated up to the axles, did not seem to us fit for artillery transports. But we found out afterwards that such a transport had not passed here for the last century. Our reception was the same by the commander and his officers in full dress: the same military honours, only that we were taken

to the General's reception-room, where coffee was handed in little cups. The old rusty ordnance on the walls round the town, and a light battery of six guns—the latter a present from Victor Emmanuel—was all the artillery the kingdom of Tunis could boast of. Some howitzers, mortars, breechloaders, are also mostly the presents of European sovereigns, especially from Louis Philippe. Rules and regulations there are none; the officers did not even understand us when we asked what these were. We also noticed that there were no bronze cannon, but our dragoman explained that this was on account of the great intrinsic value of bronze, and the high price Tunisian Jews pay for it. The bronze material had simply been sold!

After we had sipped our coffee the commander took us first into a large hall in the front building, where some thousands of muskets and sabres, as well as several hundreds of bayonets and pistols, were erected into trophies in a very striking way; but all these weapons dated from centuries ago. They had wide muzzles, and percussion and match locks. All looked clean and polished on the outside, but as soon as we took down a musket we discovered the dirt and rust which covered lock and barrel. Neither had the sabres and pistols the least historical or intrinsic value, or they would have disappeared long ago.<sup>1</sup>

After inspecting this hall, and having been shown some very old Turkish cannon, and mortar tubes, without carriages, the commander seemed to wish to get

<sup>1</sup> The only interesting weapon here was a very ancient revolver gun with seven chambers, constructed with a flint lock.

rid of us. But we wanted to see more: so we were taken through the barracks and courtyards, which were empty, and were at least distinguished by great cleanliness—a circumstance which cannot be valued high enough amongst these dirty Orientals. The magazine of the army-accoutrements of Tunis was a small hall with stands against the walls, on which some clothes, a few pairs of boots, old pistols, trumpets, fez, and flags were ranged. The flags were of red silk, and displayed two crossed cannon tubes with a grenade each, and were ornamented with half-moons. The magazine of a single company of Austrian infantry contains more clothes than the one belonging to the whole of this funny army.

Another room was filled with the old swords of Bedouins, in sheaths of leather or wood with cross-barred hilts. However bad and clumsy these swords looked, the blades were beautiful, one of them being so heavy and large that it could evidently only be wielded with two hands. Some dark places—probably so kept on purpose—contained a few Bedouin saddles and covers, the top ones clean and tidy, the lower ones torn and dirty.

I wished to ask several questions as to the calibre of the field guns, about the horses, and other matters, but my dragoman whispered that they did not know it themselves, and I should only perplex them. There was only one horse in the stables. In the courtyards cannon balls were piled up in pyramids, before which an artilleryman walked up and down with a very strange-looking weapon. He carried what I took for a long spear: but just as I was going to ask whether the artillery here were armed with

spears, I found out that the man carried a broom-handle with a bayonet fixed on the top of it. This original sentry did not know what to do when we passed, as he could not present arms with the broomstick, so he simply laid it aside and put his hand to his fez to salute us.

Of ammunition—which, if wanted, is imported from Europe—there was in this central depot of the Tunisian army no sign. How happy ought this country to be that it has to pay so little attention to its means of defence!

The hills round Tunis are crowned with powerful forts with heavy stone walls, big, black cannon looking out of the loopholes. When Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia visited the military institutions of Tunis some years ago, the Minister of War, who is mightily proud of his forts, asked him seriously if he had ever seen stronger forts. The answer of the Prussian Field-marshal is unfortunately unknown.

There are distributed in the province here and there small forts, mostly ruined citadels dating from the Spanish time, furnished with old iron cannon and a couple of hungry-looking soldiers, dressed in rags, who have had no pay for years.

The forts round Tunis are not in quite so bad a state ; but this is on account of the foreign officers who come now and then as tourists to view the military institutions of the Bey. In one of the forts a negro is commanding officer.

Of course, there is no question here of a fixed length of service, or of a regular conscription. This is left entirely to the caprice of the Minister of War and his officers.

Every year information is collected at the central office about those young men who have attained the age to serve, and who, at the same time, are rich enough to buy themselves off. When afterwards the recruiting officers pass through the country, they have their eye principally on these, and they are not let free till they have paid a large sum according to their means. This sum is afterwards divided between the recruiting officers and the Minister of War. As soldiers when once recruited have to serve all their life, and are only let off through illness or old age, rich young men are only too glad to pay large sums, and to renew payment when recruiting is repeated. This arbitrary proceeding of the officers falls heaviest on the townspeople, as the nomadic Bedouins from the country are only put into the irregular troops, who enjoy more liberties.

It is seen that the Tunisian soldier is not to be envied. Hunger and want are his lot, and there is no hope that the internal state of things of the Regency will alter as long as this is in Mohammedan hands.

Of greater value than these starved "regular" troops without discipline are perhaps the irregular Spahis, Zouaves, and Kuruglis; they are well fitted for guerilla warfare; and in case of surprises, or in skirmishes, they might be of use with their Oriental weapons. To these would have to be added the hordes of Bedouins of the Tell and the Dsherid if the Bey should succeed in inflaming them against an enemy. But even if he could unite them under one command he lacks even for the smallest military expedition what is most important—money.

And now for the Navy, which ought to exist, considering that Tunis has a Minister of Marine, a great Admiralty in Goletta, and also a naval arsenal. But this is even in a worse state than the army. The two steamers which the Government bought some years ago from an Italian steam navigation company for large sums, are useless; a third one lies dry in Porta Farina, and serves as a quarantine station. In the naval arsenal nothing is seen but a few anchors, tugs, and large rowing boats; the finest of these latter is generally in use for rowing some Consul or other notability across to the steamboats of the Italian companies. The twelve sailors who then man it, together with two admirals and a few captains, form the navy. A good workshop for repairs furnished with machines and implements is abandoned, and the material is rusty.

Tunis is to-day just as helpless as at the time of Maltzan's travels, and those who compare the descriptions of the famous traveller with those given here will see that the Tunisian rulers have remained conservative in their mismanagement. This has been proved again by the last rising against the French.

## CHAPTER VII.

## LIFE AND CUSTOMS OF GOOD SOCIETY IN TUNIS.

IN no respect does the East show such a contrast to Europe as in regard to social life, and it was perhaps wrong to put the name of "good society" at the head of this chapter. Such a thing exists even less in Tunis than in Cairo, Constantinople, or Algiers, where European habits in the shape of patent leather boots, eye-glasses, dress coats, and white neckties, together with the mysteries of the female toilet, have made their appearance long ago. The commercial and social conquest of the Orient might be compared to the storming of fortresses of which many a one has fallen victim to a diplomatic and commercial army ; only Tunis, the old piratical State, resisted these trials with the most passive consistency. It is a mighty bulwark, in which the customs of the Middle Ages and religious intolerance are the commanders who rule over an army as obstinate as it is orthodox—viz. the inhabitants of Tunis. At the gate of the fortress the Islam keeps watch, and rejects every innovation, and every change of what has existed for centuries, with the conscientiousness of a Prussian custom-house officer. Emancipation of women, the press, machinery,

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free trade, social entertainments, theatre, sport, dinners evening parties—all stand outside this gate, and neither through stratagem nor by force can they obtain an entrance into the Mohammedan fortress. Inside the walls these innovations would find many a follower, especially amongst women, who, ever since Eve's time, plot treason ; but the Mohammedan woman is too much the slave of habits of the Middle Ages, and too much restrained to be of any use to possible confederates.

Perhaps the entry of the French has made a difference ; but it is as yet impossible to report about the "season of Tunis," to describe sports, toilets, etc., for there is no "society," and not society's most important and influential element—woman. She is in the harem, in these prisons lined with gold—she is born and lives and dies in the same place. Public life does not exist for her. No man ever sees her except her husband and her nearest relations, and her husband sees her and makes her acquaintance only after marriage ! It is a great breach of good manners to ask an Arab after his wife and children, and he would look at the question in the same light as we should if anybody asked us about our wives' most delicate secrets, or the amount of our debts, or some other private matter.

Public life, then, is confined to men, even in the best society, and that this fact does not make life very interesting for them is a matter of course. What would life be for us, say in Vienna, if suddenly all ladies were to disappear ? If in our walks, at the theatre, at evening parties we only met men and not a single woman ? If at a dinner or reception the master of the house were to lock

up previously wife and daughters, cousins and aunts ! And this year by year to the end ? But the worst must be to take a wife and to see her only after marriage ! Perhaps bachelors might console themselves for a time by visiting theatres, restaurants, cafés all the oftener, or by travelling. But if there are no such things as theatres, and if in travelling he never meets a woman ? Such reflections allow us to see Oriental circumstances in their true light, and they do not seem very enviable, especially in Tunis. But it would not be quite so bad if the Moorish ladies, at least those of the better class, possessed the least sense or wit, if they could enliven their husbands' home in the same way that a young European can, when she lives with her husband in a snug retired castle. But very few of the ladies of the harems can read, or sing, or write, and all they can offer is their person. But as the Oriental buys the "cat in the bag," disappointments are often in store for him, sufficient to render him cross for the rest of his life.

Tunis possesses neither theatres, nor cafés, nor restaurants in the European sense of the word ; and evening parties or other amusements are unknown. Therefore it is a puzzle for anybody who visits the East for the first time how the Moor passes his time. He cannot stay at home, and cannot, on account of his harem, receive anybody there except at the gate. If he wants to see his friends and acquaintances, he must go to the bazaar, where he remains the whole day. A few cups of coffee, some cigarettes, a piece of meat or cake, eaten standing, with the fingers, is sufficient for him for the whole day. Not

until the evening does he return home, when he takes his meal, consisting generally of one or two dishes, alone. Then he goes either to a small coffee-house or to one of



EVENING PRAYER.

the Hashish caverns to stupefy his brain with this intoxicating narcotic, or he is present at one of the many orgies which are held in these dens by dancers and jugglers of

the lowest kind. . Or perhaps he sits down by some gossip and listens to his tale. The greatest part of his time he spends in praying ; and he must think it quite a godsend that Mohammed has ordered so many prayers daily. They do for passing the time, as well as for gymnastics, for, as an orthodox Moslem, he has to throw himself forty times unto the ground daily, and touch it with his forehead. And what is more difficult is, that he has to get up as often and stretch his hands out, etc. If, therefore, time hangs heavily upon him, he takes his little carpet out of the pocket of his plaited dressing-gown, spreads it on the ground, and says his prayer. Business is easier to him than to Europeans. With us time rolls on so fast that we lose breath, and it requires an effort to keep pace with it. But with the Moslem time has been standing still, and he stands still with it. The rest follows of itself.

Wonderful to say, he is not the least envious of the European, whose accomplishments, inventions, and creations are not applauded by him in the least. Even he who has travelled in Europe, who has seen Paris, Vienna, and the civilised world, likes to return to his turbaned Orient, and has no wish to revisit Europe. The Mohammedian, whether here in Tunis or anywhere else, does not consider the European as a higher, more cultivated race, mentally far above him ; on the contrary, notwithstanding their wonderful progress, notwithstanding the beautiful products he receives from them, he is, in the eyes of the Mohammedian, something inferior, something to be looked down upon. He has, in respect to Europeans, about the same views as we have in regard to conjurers and jugglers.

We admire their tricks, look with astonishment on their cleverness, but generally despise them as men. European dealers and colonists appear to Mohammedans in the same light. Who is no Moslem can never be his equal, can never gain his respect. This is one of the principal reasons why the Orient is so opposed to Europeans, and why a mixture of Mohammedans with other nations of a different creed is an impossibility.

It is a mistake to believe that the Moors are the governing race in Tunis. They, who in the course of centuries have repeatedly played so important a part, and who have been the chief supports of culture, found indeed a new home in Tunis after they were driven from Spain ; and there is a part of the town called " El Andulas" to this day. But if they kept their name, they have lost long ago their brave martial spirit, their high culture and influence, and not they, but the Turks and Mamelukes, are the ruling element in Tunis to-day. This happened in consequence of the sway of the Turks. The Beys and Pashas usurped, with their hordes of Janizaries, all power, put their own creatures into all influential and profitable offices, and left only trade to the Moors. Quiet shopkeeping certainly did not contribute to preserve the martial spirit of a race once famed for its bravery ; and so to-day we see the direct descendants of the kings of Andalusia selling rose-water ! That they really can boast of this descent is proved by their family papers, which the Arabs generally keep with greater care and honour more than a European does his patent of nobility. In this way the Shereefs (descendants of the Prophet) prove their high extraction,

and enjoy, through belonging to the holy family, not a little consideration in the country ; and these Shereefs, counting many thousands, form the real aristocracy in Mohammedan States. As an external distinction, they wear, twisted round their fez, a green turban ; and the reason that they are met with so frequently in all towns is, that the female descendants are also allowed to call themselves Shereefs.

The Moors form the middle class of Tunis, and "society" is, as mentioned before, represented by the Mamelukes. They have the reins of government in their hands ; they are the Ministers, Generals, Caids, Judges, and everything influential. The money, principally stolen or extorted, is also possessed by them ; and this is the first time in the history of the Regency that a born Tunisian has been made Prime Minister. Mamelukes were always invested with this office before.

The bearers of this name have no cause to be proud of it, for, literally translated, it signifies "slave," and the Mamelukes are really nothing else but Greeks and Syrians, who once were slaves of the Beys and Pashas, and understood how to insinuate themselves into the favour of their rulers by their inborn craftiness, meanness, and cunning. Some of them were brought up with the children of their masters, and outdid these even, when they had entered on their careers. They inherited no name from their parents, who were generally unknown, but that avarice and slyness which distinguish Greeks and Armenians all through the Levant, and which, in a country like Tunis, are the best dowry with which to obtain honours and riches.

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These Mamelukes, then, and perhaps a few Syrians and Candians, constitute the first society, if you can speak of first society at all in a country where a slave or a barber may be the favourite of the Bey any day, and Prime Minister soon after. These knowing persons are also well aware of the fact that courteousness and condescension make them popular, and for that reason there is less spirit of caste among them than anywhere else. The Minister has intercourse with his hairdresser, the General sits in his tailor's shop and plays draughts with him. Woman being absent, who is the greatest support of the spirit of caste, causes the last vestige of it to disappear.

Only when meeting, do the Tunisians show any submission to these lords: they then kiss their hands, or even the hem of their dress. They do this, however, also to old people and some others, so that kissing hands must not be overrated. It is astonishing how well these uncultured dignitaries, taken from the lowest depths, understand how to give their manners an appearance of aristocratic polish which increases as they rise in their social position. At home they remain rough, brutal creatures, but as soon as they leave the house they turn grand gentlemen, and nobody would suppose for a moment that they would even now kiss the hands of their betters or clean their boots; this servile submission, and their excessive desire of pleasing, also maintains them in their places and positions, which they use first of all as a means of enriching themselves.

Within a few years they have generally enough to build a house or buy a villa in the neighbourhood of Tunis. This

is the moment when they try to withdraw themselves from the power of the Tunisian Ministers, their superiors. If these latter see that one of their Generals or Caids has scraped together too many riches, or has bought a handsome estate, they either ask for it as a present or simply take it away, as was the case with General Bakush, whose house the First Minister wished for. These fortunes, then, dishonestly got are always in danger. But the loose state of things in Tunis, their own foreign extraction, and the corruptibility of some of the gentlemen of the "corps consulaire," make it possible for them to become subjects of some European State—of Greece, for instance, or Spain—and with little trouble they have themselves inscribed as such. Under these circumstances the Minister, or even the Bey, has no more power over them, and the respective Consul alone is their master and judge. They might now give the slip to the Minister altogether, but they take good care not to leave their berth till they are driven out of it or replaced by another favourite.

Such is, as a rule, the career of a Mameluke. Now let us look at them in their homes, in their surroundings. Family life and family happiness as we enjoy it in Europe is unknown in the East. The Mameluke possesses, like every rich Moor, a harem, only it does not contain as many wives as people generally suppose. The four wives allowed by the Koran are rarely kept, and even Tunisians of high standing, like Generals Kerreddin, Bakush, Elias, and others, have one wife only, whom they like to hear addressed as Madam Kerreddin, Madam Bakush, etc. She is the "official" wife, and at the visits of the wives

of the Consuls, she represents the General's house and does the honours. But these evil-doers have many slaves who are wives without conjugal privileges. It is the old story with a different name.

In dress and manner these princely favourites try to imitate Europeans as much as possible : they are dressed either in the uniform of a Tunisian General or in black dress with white tie and fez. Patent leather shoes more especially are considered the height of fashion for a true bureaucrat. There being no office hours, and they having nothing particular to do, these young secretaries and diplomats stand about at the principal entrance of the Minister's palace, lean against columns, smoke cigarettes, and wait for the Minister's orders. If the latter drives to the Bey, they rush before his carriage in the greatest haste to be in time before the gate to kiss his hand. These sons of Mamelukes spend their leisure hours in the wildest way, and not five out of a hundred occupy themselves with any serious work. No authority exists for them except that of their fathers and old relations, for whom they have great respect.

The quarter of the Mamelukes of Tunis lies in the upper part of the town, in the neighbourhood of the "Kasba," the prison fortress, often mentioned before. To have a palace in one of the quiet, narrow streets, in the midst of the "grandees of the empire," has always been the dream of every upstart. Great sums are spent for furnishing this palace ; Parisian carpets and furniture, gilt picture-frames, mirrors, chandeliers and vases are crowded into his drawing-room. Part of the house,

generally the ground floor and the front rooms of the first floor, are reserved for receptions. The harem, furnished in a still more luxurious manner, lies at the back of the house, quite shut out. There is no trace anywhere of the exquisite products of the East: none of their carpets, filigrees, divans, little smoking tables and Moorish shrines; he spends fabulous sums to equal the Parisians, gets taken in and cheated by the purveyors, and is laughed at by the Consuls and Europeans who visit him into the bargain. To give an instance. He will hang three or four large glass chandeliers in a small room, puts besides some candelabra on the side-tables, and at least two or three clocks between, which do not go. These clocks are a true picture of Tunis, which is also at a standstill, waiting for the Europeans to wind it up.

But the best of all is their taste in pictures. They think it perfection to have of the reigning Bey not one portrait, but at least three, and always the same. So they buy three copies of an engraving, put them in broad gilt frames and hang them all in a row.

Before the gates of these Mameluke palaces there are generally a number of negroes in splendid costumes embroidered in gold; they take no notice of their master's visitors, except it be a Consul or some distinguished European. And if at last, moved by a "bakshish" to give an answer and to see if the "Sidi" (this is the designation of a grandee in Tunis) is at home, there is in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred a refusal. Especially do they tire the patience of their master's creditors, all well known

to them ; they have to lay siege for weeks before they can be admitted. If they succeed at last, there is a new disappointment, for, however rich, the distinguished Tunisian has never any money. What he does with it is a puzzle ; even the richest amongst them is constantly in pecuniary embarrassment ; he possesses the value of millions in fields, cattle, horses, camels, but can scarcely ever pay the wages of his servants ; he therefore always wants the Jew, who lends him the necessary cash on usurious terms. It is a state of things which often reminds you of that of the "petits seigneurs" in the Russian provinces.

Of course there are worthy exceptions amongst these Mamelukes, as, for instance, the former Turkish Grand Vizier, the often-named Kereddin, General Bakush, etc. Though also Mamelukes in the fullest sense of the word—that is to say, former slaves—they have attained by frequent travels in Europe and by assiduous studies, a certain degree of culture ; they speak French, and have intercourse with distinguished Europeans, but they are only exceptions, and are not exactly encouraged by the orthodox part of Moslem society.

A few high offices are still filled here and there by Turks, especially military ones ; but, on the whole, the Turks, together with their descendants by Arabian mothers—the Kuluglis—are totally impoverished. From among them are recruited the lazy, but proud and incapable "Janizaries" or "Kawasses" of the foreign consulates, of the banks and of the Bey's household. The rest of them are still maintained by the Government accord-

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ing to old usage. This means a loaf of bad bread a day each and shelter in one of the empty barracks. In summer the Mamelukes wander after the Bey like sheep after the bell-wether. But their favourite sojourn is either "Manouba" or "Ariane" in the neighbourhood of Tunis, in which two places most of the "aristocrats" have their villas in the midst of palm groves and orangeries. But even here there is no mutual intercourse, and their ill-gotten gains do them no good. They do not know the proper way of spending money.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*LIFE IN A MOORISH HAREM.*

IN many descriptions of the East and of Oriental customs, Tunis, Algiers, and Tripolis are included, and put on a level with other Oriental countries. Nothing is more erroneous than this mixing up of the Eastern and Western States of the Orient. I have repeatedly, and for a long time, visited the Mohammedan dominions of the three parts of the world which lie around the Mediterranean. But in every single country I found different habits and manners, though an apparent external equality has deceived many tourists in this respect. And how is it possible that, amongst the Moors and Kabyles of Oran and Tlemsan, the same customs are prevalent as amongst the races of Asia Minor and Arabia, divided as they are by more than a thousand miles, and by desert, sea, and mountains? But populated countries are more capable than water and desert of separating different races—as in this case Egypt. Only by the Koran were they united hitherto. This contains so many directions about religion, family life, and ceremonies that a certain uniformity must necessarily be produced; but no book has been interpreted in so many different ways, or contains such oracular advice, as this Bible of the

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Orientals. The vagueness of these directions, and the infeasibility of their execution, influenced the Oriental women even more than the men. In consequence of their slight intercourse with the outer world, their total ignorance of other countries and even of their nearest surroundings, they could still less change the mode of life peculiar to them than the men. Every one will recognise at once on those large steamers which contain the Mecca pilgrims and so often cross the Red Sea, the different Oriental races by their dress and appearance, even if he does not speak Arabic. If, through more frequent visits, he comes in closer contact with them, the difference of language, customs, and dress will strike him even more. Amongst the Christian nations of Europe this difference is more evident as we reach a lower stage of civilisation, and the farther we get from the large towns into the country places. There we find in different districts different costumes, dialects, and habits, while in the larger towns these remain almost the same. In the East, just the opposite is the case. Here the variety is to be found in the large towns, whereas little difference is seen in the country.

Tunis furnishes a striking example of this. It is the second town of the African continent, and probably also the oldest, and much less affected by European influence than the Egyptian or Algerian towns. Here, Oriental or rather Tunisian life has been preserved in its original primitive form, and you meet during a longer residence those many peculiarities unknown in other Oriental countries. This is equally true of both sexes. Though I

cannot boast of having penetrated during my stay in Tunis into a harem while it was inhabited by its tenants, I was fortunate enough to hear everything worth knowing from European ladies who, by a long residence in Tunis, as well as through their intimate relations with the established feminine world, were better entitled than anybody else to give me the necessary particulars. My own experience is limited to the very interesting visits of several empty harems, and to life in the streets.

Women are kept much stricter in Tunis than either in Egypt or Turkey. In Constantinople and Cairo they enjoy a certain liberty ; they may visit each other, drive out and may make purchases themselves in the bazaars. Those towns are too large, and there is too much traffic for their movements to be controlled as they are here. Moorish ladies of high standing in Tunis never show themselves in the street ; and there are thousands of them whose only walk during their whole lives has been from the house of their parents to that of their husbands. Poor women have to go out to make their purchases, and also to go to public baths, as they have none in their houses ; but they are veiled to such a degree, and enveloped in so many shawls, that you can scarcely see the tips of their fingers. Amongst the hundred Moors you meet in the narrow streets of Tunis and in the " Suks" (bazaars) there is perhaps one woman ; and, to judge by her movements, she is, as a rule, old and decrepit. All wear the black veil or yashmak, of plaited horsehair, which they press close to the face, covering it almost entirely ; even their eyes are rarely seen, except they are beggars or fast women. The women of the middle

classes not only wear the yashmak and haik (a sort of white bornous), but they also hold a dark, heavy, silk handkerchief with both hands before their face, so that



NOBLE ARAB WOMAN.

they can only see two or three steps before them, to avoid dirtying themselves in the muddy little streets. Therefore you only see their feet clothed in little slippers, either embroidered with gold or of patent leather, and perhaps a

little bit of the calf, dressed in a snow-white stocking, ornamented with silver or golden m'sais (clasps), which clink at every step like spurs. Scarcely ever are they accompanied by children. They generally glide by quickly, and close to the wall ; and if they meet Europeans, they often turn another way, so as to avoid coming near the hated Giaurs. Woe be to the European who, in the presence of men, were to stare at a Moorish woman or dared to accost her ! The Moors are, both in respect of their religion and their women, the greatest fanatics ; and to pursue a woman or to enter a mosque may cost one's life to this day.

The European who, misled by romantic descriptions, expects to find here splendid odalisks, beautiful as the day, and ready to love him, will be greatly disappointed. There are none of those secluded, fanciful palaces with the accompanying balconies, on which the fair one rests. No seductive eyes behind dark trellised windows suggestive of a continuation of the romantic affair ! Europeans, as well as natives, have no opportunity for adventures except during the time of the Rhamadan festival ; and if he likes to try by money or other contrivance, he risks his head. The man who catches his wife *in flagrante* has the right at once to kill her, as well as the disturber of his peace, and these cases are not of rare occurrence.

In spring, when the hot days begin, I have often seen long rows of hermetically - closed carriages with armed eunuchs on the boxes and guards on horseback, leave town to go to the watering-places or country seats of the neighbourhood—these were the harems of the rich, chang-

ing domicile for some months. Instead of windows, these carriages had red-painted boards, and only rarely red curtains, lifted a little bit here and there to show you an arm or the outline of a face in the dark carriage. I was often sorry to have to be satisfied with this, but I was still more sorry for the poor women to whom was denied the enjoyment of this tropical nature, which in spring discloses its exquisite beauties. How cruelly men have interfered here with nature ! The Koran says nothing of these restrictions ; religion does not order them ; these practices have solely been dictated by the jealousy of men. Neither is it anywhere prescribed for women to be muffled up entirely in the street ; it is only the fashion, like the veil of European women. But they know better than not to observe this fashion ! In Algiers I often enjoyed the doubtful happiness of seeing the faces of Moorish women unveiled ; in Tunis this happened only once. Through the intercession of the Prime Minister I had got permission to see the splendid castle Marsa, belonging to Sidi Ali Bey ; I walked through the orange and palm groves of his park, when I found myself in that part of it which borders on his harem. Some windows were wide open, and at one of them sat the successor to the throne with one of his wives, apparently the youngest of them. Both returned my salutation, but the wife, a brunette of dazzling beauty, did not retire from the window. Good taste did not allow me to throw more than a fugitive glance at the window—though it was hard, for she was beautiful enough to be looked at for hours.

Now as to life in the harem itself. No man except

the lord and master and the nearest relations is allowed to enter ; my readers therefore must be satisfied with those intimations which I have obtained second-hand.

To do justice to etiquette, our first visit must be to the harem of the Bey. This is quartered during winter in the Bardo, the Bey's official residence. To the right of the giant staircase, which has often been described and is well known, there is a little door, bolted and grated, which is scarcely noticed by the uninitiated. This is the entrance to the harem. We knock. The face of a black eunuch appears at a closely-barred little window. He observes the faces of his visitors, closely tries to find out whether there is amongst them perhaps a man in woman's clothes, glances quickly across the courtyard, and at last opens the gate just sufficiently to let us in. A number of eunuchs just as black and just as polite as this Cerberus, stand guard on the staircase, and disappear as soon as we have ascended it. We are now in a square, surrounded by colonnades and covered with glass, into which a number of apartments open. Between the columns, on the doorsills, against the walls stand, sit, or crouch about fifty women, children, young girls, and old hags, representatives of all possible races, from the pale, white Circassian, to the negress as black as ebony,—some ugly, some beautiful. A dreadful confusion of all possible Oriental types, females of from ten years to eighty, in costumes of every different colour, each doing some sort of work, either sewing, knitting, washing, or ironing, and fixing on us eyes as curious as we fix on them. The cut of their dresses was the same with all of them, white stockings, white,

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wide trousers, and a loose upper garment reaching over the loins, of either blue, red, orange, or light-green silk without a girdle. The jet-black hair is brushed lightly backwards, and finishes in a thick plait, to which are fastened two silk ribbons of different colours, and embroidered with gold. On their heads they wear also a very peculiar velvet cap, similarly embroidered with gold, and called kuffia. This is similar to a German student's cap, but pointed. What, however, disfigures these women more than their costumes is the rouging and painting of their faces, eyebrows, eyelids, and lips, and the dyeing of the tips of their fingers and toes with brown henna, a fashion which is followed all over the Orient, and without which no woman is considered beautiful. It is only quite lately that some of the wives of Tunisian grandes have given up this silly habit.

The place in which we find ourselves, is the only abode of the women of the harem, from the time of their entry until their death. Everything necessary for them is manufactured here. With the exception of the stuffs and raw products, furniture and jewellery which the master of the house buys, all is made in this harem. The servants of the Bey's first wife are at the same time the slaves of the Bey. Some of these have never left the yard in which we see them to-day ; their bed-rooms have no windows, and the only light which can penetrate, comes through the dull glass panes of the roofs ! Here they eat, work, and sleep ; all the year round they live in complete ignorance of the outer world, which they have never seen, unless as children. Are they unhappy for this reason ?

We must suppose it ; but it is not so. They have perhaps some notion of the life and of the amusements of European women, who sometimes come to see them in their loneliness, but they do not know exactly what it is like. And these presentiments, this longing, this looking for the unknown, impresses in their youth an intense melancholy, on their features, which also accompanies them in their manners and movements. Slowly they approach and contemplate us with a naïve and silent curiosity, which seems mixed with conjectures about our own lives and loves.

Most of these slaves are negresses, merrier, noisier, and more childish than their white sisters. They have more liberty, for while the Bey never allows the white slaves of his harem to leave him, he changes frequently the negresses, who then often marry, and with the joyousness born in them, manage yet to see life from a pleasanter point of view.

We walk now through a second place furnished with some furniture of the time of Louis XVI. Coming to another door we find again two eunuchs keeping watch. Some steps lead from here to a large room without windows, which receives light from the top. In two large alcoves opposite each other stand two large beautiful four-posters of gilt wood, beautifully carved, and before them, French sofas and easy-chairs. On the floor are some mattresses on which some girls, young and very pretty, roll about in deshabille, laughing and playing. This is the reception-room of the "Beyess," who sits on a sofa with crossed legs and salutes us ceremoniously as we enter. She is a fat old woman with an insignificant

face, by the side of which her short hair falls over the ears. Neck, arms, legs, and fingers are literally covered with costly jewellery, bracelets and rings. She wears a sort of blouse of red silk, and white linen pantaloons, which get tighter near the feet, and end in silk socks. All doors and recesses are occupied by women of the harem, who eye curiously the toilets and manners of the European ladies. There is a long pause before anybody speaks. At last the "Beyess," a very capricious lady, seems to get impatient at the silence of her visitors, and one of the latter who can speak Arabic, ventures to say some flattering words respecting the beautiful decorations of her drawing-room. This seems to cheer her up, and with a smile she shows her rings, her embroidered dresses, and her pearls. But as a matter of course, conversation soon comes to a standstill. At last permission is asked to see the bed-room. The "Beyess" rises, crosses her hands on her back, and walks carelessly towards a room at the back of the drawing-room. The bed-room which we enter is furnished quite in the European style. A four-poster of palisander wood, a chest of drawers with a large looking-glass, and easy chairs. On the wall hangs a life-size portrait of the Bey, her consort, and we hasten to congratulate her on his beauty.

"Oh yes," she answers, "he is handsome, he comes to see me every evening!" We are silent, for we know that Mohamed es Sadock for years past has visited the palace every afternoon only for appearance's sake, without even seeing her.

We return to the drawing-room, where young lovely

girls serve coffee. Some more words of politeness, and we retire, accompanied to the door by several eunuchs.

The harems of the Ministers and other grand personages in Tunis are similar to this one, the only difference being that there is more noise and merriment. The largest and most splendid harem is the one belonging to Sidi Ali Bey, who houses three hundred slaves and servants besides six legitimate wives. But in Tunis as well as in Constantinople and Cairo the fashion to have only one wife gains more and more followers. But I should not like to be misunderstood. They are not really satisfied with one wife like Europeans. On the contrary, it is only a question of having the appearance of European civilisation. They choose amongst the women of the harem one whom they surround with all possible splendour, and with the domestic state of a great lady, and present her as "Madam," etc., in European society.

I have visited many harems of men in high positions while the inhabitants were absent, and I found the richest and the most beautiful was the one in the palace of the former Grand Vizier and Tunisian Prime Minister, General Kerredin, at Manouba. This most remarkable palace, surrounded by lovely gardens, is divided in two halves, of which the one is devoted entirely to the women, and connected with the other half only by a door in the General's bed-room. A second large door leads from the general vestibule to a staircase, only accessible to ladies, at the top of which the "Arabian drawing-room" is situated, a room undoubtedly more elegantly decorated than any other

I have seen in the whole Regency. This is the reception-room of the General's wife. As in the Bey's harem, there are here two enormous four-posters in large recesses opposite each other, and also carved in gilt wood. In the middle of this room, furnished with carpets, mirrors, and bronze ornaments in the style of Louis XVI., stands a round divan with ornamental plants and palms. On the side-tables candelabras and clocks, heavily gilt. Most beautiful is the ceiling in shape of an Oriental dome, entirely covered with little mirrors put behind an interlacement of tiny golden bars. Two small doors in the background lead into two bed-rooms. The women do not live in these reception-rooms. Their habitation is on the second floor. The staircase leads into a square yard covered in with glass windows, round which the living and sleeping rooms of about a hundred female servants lie. On one side of the yard there is a small dining-room in which the General's wife dines either alone or only with a few women. Her husband is thus never present, and though the Orientals have adopted Parisian furniture and other Parisian outward forms, their charming "petits dîners à deux," do not seem to be to their taste. Madame Kerredin uses knife and fork like all other grand ladies in Tunis, but orthodox ladies and those of the middle classes eat with their fingers.

Next to the dining-room is a large hall, round the walls of which broad red velvet divans run, and here, in about twenty or thirty large painted trunks, is kept the wardrobe of the female members of the General's family. The room bordering on this is the bed-room of the Gen-

eral's wife, hung with blue paper and looking-glasses. In the centre of it, and taking up half the room, stands a large, broad bed with blue curtains, and behind it is a door leading to a dressing-room, while another scarcely perceptible leads to the General's bed-room.

To the physicians the invisibility of their patients is of course very troublesome in their calling. If the doctor is expected, the curtains are drawn across the sick-bed. If the pulse of a Moorish lady is to be felt, a eunuch covers arms and hand, and only leaves the wrist free. If the tongue is to be shown, the eunuch covers her face with his hands, and the poor lady has to stretch out her tongue between his fingers. If she suffers from smallpox, the eunuch counts the marks, and reports to the physician.

Grievous though the accusation may seem, there can be no doubt that adultery has a great charm for the beautiful Oriental women. Perhaps they have a certain right of making use of their free, unguarded moments in consequence of their husbands' coldness, and because of the division of their love amongst so many rivals. That con-nubial faithlessness is not rare is proved by the words of the Arabian poet : A Moorish woman seldom leaves her house ; but if she does, it is always with the well considered intention of deceiving her husband.

The month of adventures is, as a rule, the Rhamadan. During this festival, when Mohammedans turn night into day, women enjoy somewhat greater liberty, and they make use of it to their heart's content. It is strange that a Moorish woman feels for her husband scarcely more than indifference, while she worships her lover. And the

husband, whose wife is utterly indifferent to him, and whom he treats contemptuously, is the tenderest and most ardent lover of other women. The veiling and wrapping up of the Tunisian ladies, whenever they leave their house, facilitates these elective affinities in a high degree. They need only change their "Haiks" and wraps, and their husbands cannot recognise them.

Of course there are many honourable exceptions amongst the population of Tunis. Polygamy is not so much known amongst the Moors as with Bedouins. One wife is already to the Moor a very expensive article, while to the Bedouin she is a working power, and source of industry. With the exception of the princes and the grandes few can indulge in the luxury of a real harem. The abolition of slavery and European influence are the reasons that this African institution gets rarer and rarer. A Croesus does here and there buy a Circassian for a large sum, or has girls trained for himself at his country seat, but these are exceptions. The women are more tied to their lord and master, and he has no more the right to treat them badly, or beat them. The Bey alone has power over the life and death of his women ; the others are protected by the law. A great many Moors adapt this new form of their conjugal life with pleasure, and are willing to concede to the mother of their children a higher social position. The easiness with which marriages can be dissolved prevents to a certain extent deceptions on both sides.

The way in which Moorish ladies are prepared for





THE BAZAAR.

## CHAPTER IX.

## WALKS THROUGH THE BAZAARS OF TUNIS.

THROUGHOUT the whole Orient nothing is more interesting for the European traveller than the bazaars. Through them the streets which lack life and character become animated ; they are the heart and soul of town-life, the touchstone of the wealth and size of every individual town. As the interior of Mohammedan houses is so difficult of access, the street traffic, generally speaking, inconsiderable, these bazaars, with their endless rows of shops, wherein a multitude of people is surging up and down, with their various wares exposed for sale, give the attentive European a picture of the Oriental mode of life, of their wants, and propensities. This is less the case in Constantinople, in Cairo, and in Algiers. European culture has made a breach into old customs there. Not so in Tunis, where a great part of ancient fanaticism and of former proud reserve has been kept up together with the Islam, and where the European traveller is in the beginning restricted to visiting bazaars.

The bazaars of Constantinople and Cairo are grander and more beautiful, but those in Tunis are more interesting and peculiar. As they were centuries ago, so they

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are to-day, with only one innovation—the Jews. Up to some twenty years ago the Jewish and Moorish quarters were completely separated, and the Jews had their own bazaars. With the growth of European influence, however, greater liberties were granted them, and free competition amongst them. Very soon they took a great part of the commerce out of the hands of the apathetic Mohammedans, and they are now the wealthiest and most important element amongst the bazaar merchants. But the bazaars have lost nothing of their thoroughly Oriental characteristics through this invasion, for the Jews of Tunis differ very little from the Moors either in dress or habits.

Situated in the heart of Tunis, these bazaars seem on a first visit an inextricable labyrinth of streets and lanes, which run off into all sorts of corners and curves, pick up innumerable blind alleys, yards, and avenues, and seem to have been built without any plan and by avoiding straight lines. The plan of Tunis itself presents such an abundance of impossible streets and roads that the bazaar is only found after long rambling and searching, or if you are not looking for it. In addition to this the streets have no names, the houses no numbers. Their designation is given according to the article which is sold in them; and as there are in many streets three or four lines of business, they have also as many names. Only after many visits the way can be found in this confusion, and the fact is discovered that a certain system prevails.

The appearance of the bazaar streets is as different

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from the others as, in European towns, the commercial quarters from the other parts where people have their private houses. The narrow, quiet streets, with their white walls and barred windows, get livelier and dirtier the nearer the bazaar is approached. Instead of the iron, firmly-bolted doors which protect all dwellings, we find already here and there small shops, which become more and more numerous, and which, strange to say, all have the same kind of business.

At last the shops get close together, the street doors disappear entirely ; there is no more difference between the single houses. Finally you see the end of the lane roofed with planks resting on the roofs of the houses on either side. Here the real bazaar begins. He who comes from the sunny, hot streets, with their dazzling white walls, is at first scarcely able to distinguish the surroundings. Only by penetrating deeper into this maze of roofed, half dark, and damp bazaar lanes can he discover any arrangement ; the odd little shops, the solemn dealers, the gorgeousness of the garments, seen even in this dim light, the quantity and variety of the goods exposed for sale. It is scarcely possible to realise and seize this fantastic impression. Eye and mind seem to be in the same confused state as these bazaars we behold, and it takes a good many visits before we can make it out and think of details. Life in these narrow streets is wonderfully brisk and active, as well as picturesque. The most heterogeneous types, races, nations, and classes push against each other here ; no street is broad enough for a carriage to pass, but men on horseback or on donkeys,

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pedestrians, and from time to time heavily-loaded camels, which touch in walking both sides of the street, squeeze and knock the visitor, and ruthlessly push him aside. If at first you get impatient at coming into contact with a lot of Bedouins, with ragged, perspiring water-carriers and dirty beggars, you soon find out that nobody thinks of making room for his neighbour, and the only means to get on is by pushing and knocking in return.

The best way to visit a bazaar, and to study the wild commotion there in the morning, is to leave the crowd and enter one of the small shops, whose owners generally bid you welcome and offer you a seat on their carpet, besides presenting you with a cup of coffee. You might sit here and look on for hours without tiring, so interesting is this bazaar life. However often and long you stay, new objects of interest, new types, offer themselves constantly. It is this which makes the East so attractive, and the more we penetrate its mysteries the more do we wish to return.

We have known our own institutions all our life, they have grown upon us. But here only a few months, or perhaps weeks, are given us to learn quite a new world with all its peculiarities, and this superabundance of novelties and of remarkable sights can scarcely be exhausted. The national types, the different modes of dress, the religious and social degrees of rank, the manners, the salutations, the way of speaking, all is unrolled before our eyes; but what awakens our interest more than anything here are naturally—the women. The hours of sale in the bazaars offer the only opportunity for

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observing the life of a Tunisian woman, at least up to a certain extent, for beyond it she is absolutely invisible, a puzzle which we have no means of solving. But however secluded a Tunisian woman may live, unless she belongs to the highest classes she will always visit the bazaar and make her purchases there. What can be seen of her must be seen here—her dress, her manners, her language, if not her face.

A Moorish bazaar is not, as is sometimes supposed in Europe, only a market, where people buy and sell; it is also the manufacturing place for many articles. Booths and workshops stand so close together that of the architecture of the houses you can perceive nothing. Now and then you look into a by-street which leads to the bazaar or into dark, vaulted passages, which mostly contain little coffee-houses and "hotels" for merchants coming from the interior of the country, and for caravans. Whole families are housed here in small dark rooms, and horses and mules, possibly, share this peaceful abode; large bales of merchandise, tropical fruits, carpet-rolls, and other goods are piled up in the damp yards, and at the entrance is found, perhaps, a Moorish restaurant, where they bake cakes steeped in oil or honey, fry little pieces of meat stuck on spits like knitting-needles, and prepare the famous date-soup. There are no restaurants in Tunis as we have them in Europe; there are no tables and seats, no zealous waiters serving refreshments and trying to do the stranger out of a few sous. Tunis only knows open street-restaurants—the fireplace is in the street, or, in the

best case, in a narrow recess in the wall. The little spits with tiny bits of meat are before the fire, and the host sits next to it with a large fan to drive away thousands of flies attracted by the smell of burnt meat. A dinner consisting of two or three courses costs from one penny to twopence halfpenny ; and, as there are neither plates nor knives and forks, you eat it standing, with your fingers; for dessert you get a small cake, which is also eaten in the morning and evening, and is sold by a strolling baker for less than a halfpenny. The water-carriers, with the filled leather pipes on their backs and the clattering tin vessels in their hands, run between the diners to and fro to hand them a draught for half a farthing.

In these Tunisian bazaars there is an inconceivable pressure—everybody is as close to his neighbour and on his neighbour as he possibly can be, so that traffic and a general view of the goods are downright impossible. The smallest shop in Europe would be the largest in these bazaars, as there is scarcely a booth where more than two or three can sit next to each other. They are as a rule so small that the intending purchaser has to stand on the somewhat projecting little bench outside the shop. Under these circumstances it is only natural that in Tunis the guild of clerks and apprentices is unknown. Even their largest shops are only looked after by one man—the owner himself. But their sons and successors are sometimes allowed to look on to be initiated into the secrets of business.

After walking for hours through the gloomy bazaar lanes, where wooden roofs are put up for protection

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against the heat of the sun and too much light, you are astonished how a town, not very large, can support so many merchants. There are on both sides unbroken lines of small recesses in which the Moor sits, with a body as sleek as his face is delicate, in a costume of many colours, his legs crossed, twisting cigarettes, and drinking coffee. Every lane has its restaurant and also the "café," which is an open fireplace in a doorway, on which little tin vessels are placed. The keeper of this café is on his legs all day long, carrying cups to his customers and pouring out a beverage—black, thick, and sweet. Every visitor, every customer, even the European, gets his coffee at once, and perhaps a cigarette of excellent Tunisian tobacco.

There is much talking and sleeping, but little buying. I myself have sometimes observed merchants who did not get rid of a single pennyworth during the whole day. The reason of this must be looked for in their peculiar social circumstances. Many of the Moorish citizens have succeeded in hiding the treasures inherited from their forefathers, and so preserved them from the extortions of the Bey and his Ministers. These small fortunes would be sufficient for Mohammedans, whose wants are very small, to live comfortably in their houses. But as this would be a proof of their wealth, their property would soon fall into the hands of their rulers. So they prefer to take a shop for some hundreds of piastres a year, and to put a few empty perfume bottles and boxes into it, hanging at the same time several wax candles on the ceiling or some other article for sale, which proceeding turns them into merchants.

And there is yet another reason why the Moors have a predilection for the calling of a bazaar merchant. There is in Tunis a total absence of social life, for what could society possibly be without woman, its most important and charming element? The Moor locks up his wives and daughters, watches them with jealousy, and hides them carefully from every other man. His house is therefore inaccessible to his friends except when extraordinary festivities take place, when he locks up his whole harem into garrets. To spend days, weeks, and years with women alone is even in the case of highly-cultured European ladies a very doubtful charm. But Moorish ladies do not possess the slightest knowledge, are utterly uneducated, without an idea of reading, writing, or music, so that men are compelled to look for their amusements amongst men. In his house he can no more receive them than they him, so the bazaar shop helps them out of a difficulty. Here he not only finds some amusement, but he also visits and receives his friends, with whom he takes his coffee; the news can be heard here, too (no newspaper existing in the whole country). Hence the extent and importance of the bazaars in Tunis; not half the merchants take their calling very seriously.

All this shows the strange circumstances prevailing here; even competition is unknown, neither does the Tunisian understand what envy of trade means. It happened to me several times that a dealer had not got what I wanted. He went to his neighbour and brought from his shop the article asked for. When I asked him whether it was his property or if he had a share in it, he

always said, "Kif, kif." "It is the same whether you buy here or there." Under these circumstances it was not difficult for the Jews to make themselves masters of the market as soon as they got permission to sell there. Since then the Moor drifts towards certain bankruptcy. Already now, the jewel bazaar, the cloth and silk bazaars, and others, are entirely in the hands of the Jews, and the Arabs apply themselves only to Arabian articles, such as arms, bornouses, perfumes, etc.

It is scarcely to be supposed that any order can prevail in this confusion of narrow, dirty lanes. But this is a mistake. The principal bazaar is divided into ten divisions or "suks," according to the goods which are sold in them. Perfumes, for instance, carpets, ladies' dresses and materials, etc., have their own "suks," an "anim" or chief presiding at each of them. He is elected by the merchants or appointed by the local authorities, and it is his duty to settle all disputes regarding the bazaar and its industry, and to punish transgressions. For instance, the chief of the bakers is bound to test the weight and quality of the bread. If found unsatisfactory the baker is dragged into the street and thrown down, when policemen apply to the soles of his feet fifty or a hundred bastinado cuts, according to the chief's judgment.

The "suks" are separated by gates, and in the evening, after the last prayer, they are locked. As the bazaars are uninhabited, the merchants have watchmen there, who generally sleep on the projecting roofs of the streets, as this is the only way by which thieves could get into the

bazaars. But they break in and steal, nevertheless, just as they do in the Palais Royal in Paris.

The longest bazaar is the one where shoes are manufactured and sold. In this bazaar are hundreds of shops, and they take up nearly a dozen little streets. In every single shop three or four men are occupied with cutting out and sewing red and yellow slippers, which are the principal foot covering of the Tunisians. High top-boots of red leather are sometimes hung out for sale.

Almost as big as the shoe bazaar is the one where they knit and finish the famous fez. Nobody supposes that it is knitted with white wool, and that, before being finished, it is large enough to cover a horse's head. Through constant washing, beating, and dyeing, they are reduced to the proper measure. The fez, which in Tunis is called "sheshia," is afterwards treated by scraping, then pressed, and finally furnished with the favourite silk tassel a foot long. Such a fez, of which article the Tunisians export many thousands yearly, costs thirty or forty francs, so that it was easy for European industry to get hold of this important article of trade. But there are still hundreds here who earn their living by it.

A few walks through the bazaar of Tunis acquaint the traveller with the secrets of the whole Moorish industry, and the workmen, for all their religious fanaticism, are always ready to give every explanation required. They produce here, with the most primitive tools, the most astonishing pieces of work, which testify to the skilfulness as well as to the untiring perseverance and patience of the Moorish workmen. At the same time they are very

unpractical. Gunsmiths and armourers, for instance, still work at the historical Kabyle guns, but instead of hardening the barrel and improving the lock, they concentrate all their attention to the beautiful ornamentation. The gun is to the harmless Bedouin only a piece of ostentation, whatever Frenchmen may say ; he carries it as the European does a walking stick. They still manufacture a great number of guns with match and fire locks, spending upon them the labour of weeks in chasing the barrels and ornamenting them by inlaid silver threads and also carving the butt-end most artistically. The cabinetmakers confine themselves to making trunks, cupboards, and pretty ornaments of mother-of-pearl and ivory.

The locksmiths still make the large Saracen locks and giant keys, embellishing them in a charming manner, but without improving their construction. In no respect have the Moors stuck to the Middle Ages so persistently as in their industries. Their ancient looms, their primitive turning-lathes and tools have been transmitted from father to son, and they remind us of similar objects as we find them in European museums dating from our own Middle Ages. If European influence is visible, it only works disadvantageously. Thus they adapted only too willingly the European designs for their carpets and other materials, and only in the holy town of Kair<sup>w</sup>nan has their carpet industry been preserved in its old glory.

The "suk" in which the carpets are sold, and the beautiful woollen covers, camel-pockets, saddle-cloths, girdles, etc., made by the Bedouin women, belongs to the most interesting part of the bazaar. The gold and silver

embroideries merit our admiration especially. They show the most exquisite designs and the finest work, and the velvet jackets and velvet trousers, which are exhibited in the so-called women's bazaar, could scarcely be produced as beautifully by European workers, nevertheless they are of astonishing cheapness.

In the "Suk-el-Irba," or women's bazaar, we have an opportunity of studying the secrets of a Moorish woman's toilet, for what is hidden in the harem is offered here for sale to customers wishing to buy. Here we see the chemisettes of fine gauze interwoven with gold threads, embroidered bodices, the strangely-formed velvet caps, silk striped garments of glaring colours, embroidered slippers, etc. And even more, next to the shops, the embroiderers and weavers are working, spinning-wheels are whirling, looms are rattling, and we see the single articles come out finished from under the hands of these busy, untiring producers.

The most distinguished bazaars of Tunis are the spice, perfume, and jewel bazaars. In the first of these sit the Moors, pale, but handsome, in narrow window-seats surrounded by perfume bottles, boxes, ostrich eggs, bags with musk, bowls with dyes, wax-candles, and so on. The space is so limited that the seller can neither sit straight nor turn round. So he sits in his picturesque costume all day long, without calling to customers or inducing them in any other way to buy. If he sells nothing for weeks he does not complain. The customer is sent by Providence, and as a firm believer in fatalism, he thinks there is no necessity to assist it.

The jewel bazaar is entirely in the hands of Jews. The shops here are just as small, and the stock-in-trade is limited in every shop to a few pairs of earrings, half a dozen rings, bracelets and ankle-clasps, brooches and hair-pins. The Oriental generally, but especially the Oriental women, love jewels better than anything, and no present pleases them more than jewellery. The work is in most cases very crude, the form clumsy, and if there is any fine work to be found—like filigree, for instance—it is imported from Europe. A fraud in regard to the quality of the gold is scarcely possible, for as soon as an article is chosen buyer and seller go to the "anim," chief. He sits in a small open shop, weighs the article carefully, examines the standard of the gold, and puts the Bey's mark on. As soon as the value of the gold is calculated, the buyer has to pay a trifle for the work.

Every morning between eight and nine there is a sale by auction, when now and then bargains can be got. At this hour there is the largest crowd, and sometimes the throng is so great that a movement either forward or backward is impossible, visitors being wedged in between Bedouins, Jews, Moors, and Maltese—all this amongst screaming and shouting, there being altogether an excitement not to be expected from these grave and dignified Mohammedans. As the day advances, the emptier do the bazaars get, and in the afternoon there are no more customers, but only idlers and the friends of the merchants.

Besides this great bazaar there are several smaller ones in different suburbs. For instance, the Jews have their

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own bazaar, dating from the time when the entry into the Mohammedan one was forbidden to them. Provisions, including vegetables and fruit, are also offered in different bazaars all over the town, of which the largest is the so-called "Suk-el-Asr," or afternoon market, which is specially distinguished by dirt and refuse of all sorts. In these vegetable markets there is plenty of life in the afternoon. Near the sea-gate, in the heart of the Franks' quarter, the Europeans have their own bazaar, which in plan and character resembles those of the small ports in the Mediterranean, and is in no wise worthy of the importance and magnitude of the European colony. Italians and Maltese are here the principal element, and the goods come in most cases from Leghorn and Genoa. But with the entry of the French this will probably soon be altered.

## CHAPTER X.

## IN THE GHETTO.

AMONGST all the countries known to us, Morocco and Tunis are the only ones where the Jewish element has preserved its patriarchal customs of olden times, and where it still occupies the exceptional position imposed upon it by despotism. The greater the liberties which other countries granted them, the more they amalgamated with the people—as, for instance, in France and England—without, however, giving up their religion unconditionally ; in Tunis they only obtained this liberty latterly, and then only limited. The curious habits and peculiarities which adhere to them would, considering their wonderful capacity to accommodate themselves to all circumstances, disappear as quickly here as they have done in the neighbouring Algiers, but they still live the life of their fathers. This latter is, in its strange mixture of Arabian, Jewish, and Spanish customs, so interesting that a description will be justified. The importance of the Jewish element increases, moreover, in the towns of Barbary, and also in the districts near the Sahara, more and more ; in all the towns on the African coasts it actually forms from a third to a fifth of the whole populace. Since the Jews enjoy the protection of the

Consuls and greater rights on the part of the Governments, they supplant the Arabs more and more in trade and in-



ARABIAN FABLE-TELLERS.

dustry, so that the time is not far off when they will be the more important element of the districts along the coasts.

It has lasted long enough before the Jews enjoyed in

those countries an existence worthy of human dignity. Centuries of the greatest misery and of the most cruel oppression have succeeded in bending them, but with the toughness peculiar to their race, they have revived since they share the rights and liberties of the hereditary people. It is therefore not to be wondered at if the Moors and Bedouins look at them with an evil eye and fear them. This fear and jealousy is added to the hatred of centuries, and the old "Dshifa ben Dshifa" (carrion, son of carrion), is still the usual designation when they speak of Jews. Perhaps it would not have come to this if the Jews, according to a Moorish legend, had not occasioned it themselves in olden times. In the second century of the Hegira, they insulted the caravan which every year takes the presents of the Mohammedans to Mecca. The wrath of God punished all men and boys of the Jewish race by death for this outrage on the Prophet. But to save the race from total perdition, God granted them the one grace at their request, namely, to rise from the dead for one night and to return to their wives. Hence all Jews born since are called "Dshifa ben Dshifa," and this legend will partly explain the contempt which fanatical Mohammedans express for Jews.

The oppressions to which those latter are exposed, even to this day, are almost incredible. In Algiers the French Government emancipated them some forty years ago, but in Tunis, Morocco, and Tripolis they only got certain liberties during the last few years. Till then they had to live in a certain quarter, and were not allowed to appear in the streets after sunset. If they were compelled

to go out at night they had to provide themselves with a sort of cat-o'-nine-tails at the next guard-house of the "Zaptieh," which served as a kind of passport to the patrols going round at night. If it was a dark night, they were not allowed to carry a lantern like the Moors and Turks, but a candle, which the wind extinguished every minute. They were neither allowed to ride on horseback nor on a mule, and even to ride on a donkey was forbidden them except outside the town ; they had then to dismount at the gates, and walk in the middle of the streets, so as not to be in the way of Arabs. If they had to pass the "Kasba," they had first to fall on their knees as a sign of submission, and then to walk on with lowered head ; before coming to a mosque, they were obliged to take the slippers off their feet, and had to pass the holy edifice without looking at it. As Tunis possesses no less than five hundred mosques, it will be seen that Jews did not wear out many shoes at that time. It was worse even in their intercourse with Mussulmans; if one of these fancied himself insulted by a Jew, he stabbed him at once, and had only to pay a fine to the State, by way of punishment. As late as 1868 seventeen Jews were murdered in Tunis without the offenders having been punished for it : often a Minister or General was in the plot, to enrich himself with the money of the murdered ones. Nor was that all. The Jews—probably to show their gratefulness for being allowed to live in the town, or to live at all—had to pay 50,000 piastres monthly to the State as a tax !

And, notwithstanding all these oppressions and humiliations, the Jews continued to assert themselves in the midst

of the Moorish populace, and could even boast of greater wealth than their oppressors, over whom they gained an advantage by their superior capacities and greater cunning. The Tunisians were in want of the Jews to get rid of the booty they brought home from their piratical expeditions. How the Jews managed to buy and sell these goods, considering their strict exclusion, is a puzzle. But still, they always possessed the money to buy the stolen wares, to lend money on precious stones, and turn gold and coins into jewels.

Many Jews, especially those whose ancestors were driven from Spain, have by reciprocal services or bribery succeeded in putting themselves under the protection of the European Consulates, and so escaped the power and jurisdiction of the Bey and his Ministers. This is the reason that some of the Consulates in Tunis count their subjects or *protégés* by hundreds, and even thousands, amongst the Tunisian Jews.

In our days when, through the agency of the Consuls, especially the French one, the oppression of the Jews has come to an end, and when they are equal before the law with Moors, Bedouins, and Christians, they have no more cause to hide their wealth. They build new houses in European style, show themselves in smart new dresses, and, owing to their intellectual superiority, get business into their own hands with surprising rapidity. The old servants and slaves have become the masters of the Arabs, at least as far as business and finances go. They, once scorned, occupy now honoured positions in the Government. The Bey's treasurer is a Jew. There are amongst

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them many physicians, bankers, merchants, stockbrokers, and lawyers, who do business with the Government, and who, compared with their Arabian colleagues, occupy a better position and have a more lucrative income. But the Arabians still avoid them. The social ban to which they have been subject for centuries past exists still to-day, though more to the disadvantage of the Arabian than their own. In that same bazaar where once they were debarred from trading otherwise than in the "Suk-el-Zara" (jewel bazaar), they are masters now, and have driven the Moorish dealer from many streets. Thanks to the beneficent activity of the Paris Society "Union Israélite," poor Jewish children are sent to good schools and taught some trade or a branch of industry gratuitously. Besides Arabic, their own language, they learn French and Italian ; and they show so much talent that no doubt before another generation has passed they will, financially, be masters of all the commerce in the whole Regency. In the little streets of Tunis, narrow, but ever lively, they form the most important element. The Arab has neither their dexterity nor their volubility. He visits his bazaar, prays much, walks little, and lets Allah take care of the rest. The task of his life is not to make money, but to enjoy peace and contentment. This makes it easier for the Jew to work himself up so quickly from the depths in which the oppression of centuries kept him. Amongst the many nations and races of which the population of this interesting old piratical city is composed, the Jews are the second in number, and the finest in race. Though the Moors are often called handsome, they are generally far too stout,

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and their features too effeminate, to be able to claim manly beauty. During the afternoons, especially on Saturdays, an opportunity offers on the Marina, the beautiful promenade of Tunis, to make comparisons. Kabyles, Moors, Vandals, Bedouins, Turks, and Europeans of all nations move here in a dense crowd. The Jew is known at once by his looks and by his dress. Tall and strongly-built, with fine, noble features and long beards, they show still more to advantage in their peculiar, picturesque costumes. They are not bound to wear a certain dress, as formerly, but they seem desirous of their hereditary appearance. They have only changed their head-dress. Formerly they were forbidden to wear the red fez or sheshia of the Arab, but wore the prescribed black turban wound round a white fez—a kind of nightcap. They have now adopted the red fez, but keep to the black turban, while the younger generation has given up the turban altogether. They are allowed to wear the white turban of the Arabs, but they never make use of this permission. Their short jackets are of a light colour, richly embroidered with gold and open in front ; and while the old orthodox Jews still keep to the black trousers, with many folds tied below the knee, the younger generation has adopted light-coloured ones. They all wear snow-white stockings ; and the yellow or red leather slippers of the Arabs have been discarded by the Jewish swell in favour of the patent leather shoes imported from Europe, but which he treads down, so that his heel projects one or two inches beyond the shoe. A broad shawl, generally richly embroidered, is thrown round the loins, and while in winter their

costume is completed by a long circular cloak of light-blue colour, they replace this in summer by a fine cloak of spotless whiteness, call the R'fara.

Neither they nor the Arabs carry arms ; and they are scarcely necessary in Tunis, which is safer than European towns. Stately as a Jew's appearance is, and tasteful as is his dress, it is only so as long as he keeps his fez on his head. Like the Arabs, they are in the habit of shaving their heads, only leaving a small tuft of hair on the top, which has a most ludicrous effect.

It is not very long ago that the Jews, who number 30,000 here, were allowed to live in a Moorish quarter ; and the limits of their own quarter were so strictly fixed and watched, that they scarcely dared to step beyond it, the more so if a mosque was in the neighbourhood. They were oppressed, tortured, and robbed by the Tunisian rulers. Their wives and daughters were treated in an arbitrary manner, and their own lives were taken with impunity. Still they were obliged to remain, for, driven out of Europe, they had settled here, and having in the course of generations lost their own language, had adopted Arabic instead. They were deprived of the possibility of acquiring riches by the Draconic laws of the Tunisian despots, so they built their own miserable houses or bought them in quarters left by the Moors. But in one respect they had an advantage over the Arabs : they increased very rapidly ; and whereas the original Jews' quarter only covered a small space, it actually takes up to-day a fourth part of the whole town, still spreading, and con-

sequently driving the Moors from the neighbouring streets.

The strange costumes of the Jewish women, the handsome men I met in Tunis, and the many peculiar habits and customs of which I had heard so much before, induced me to devote more attention to the Jewish quarter than other travellers had done until now. During my stay of several months in Tunis, I spent many a day in the midst of this strange people, and was the witness of many a family festivity and public occurrence. They received me everywhere with the greatest readiness and attention ; and my experiences did not at all agree with the reports of former travellers, especially Maltzan, who one and all described them, more or less, as depraved.

He who enters the Jews' quarter for the first time is astonished how it is possible for human beings to live here, and to carry on business and have intercourse into the bargain. There is an indescribable entanglement of narrow, angular lanes, twisted and interlaced in all directions, where the rays of the sun never penetrate entirely. There is no passage in this endless labyrinth where you could not touch the walls on both sides if you stretched out your arms. If they are a little broader in some places, this waste of room is compensated for a little lower down, where the lane is so narrow that two people meeting have to press against the wall if they wish to pass each other. The houses are generally one or two stories high, they are dingy, dirty, and dilapidated. Some hang over the street as if they wanted to prop each other

up and prevent a possible fall ; others are built right across and form dark, long passages, from which dampness and dirt do not disappear summer or winter, and which remain cool even under a burning sun. On the upper floor there are usually one or two grated windows, just as in Moorish houses, which in their outward appearance they resemble altogether. The pavement is miserable, full of big stones and deep holes covered with puddles and every refuse, which, being never removed, putrefies and exhales in summer the most offensive smells. This accumulation of dirt of centuries may be the reason why the streets are all higher than the houses, and that only by going down a few steps the inner yard is reached. This is partly the fault of the owners of these pest-houses, but the greater blame falls on the shoulders of the local authorities. They receive from each family in Tunis six piastres (three shillings) yearly, as a tax for removing all dirt from the streets, whereas the families have done their duty when they have forwarded the filth from their houses and piled it up in the middle of the narrow street. But how is the cleansing of streets possible when scarcely two or three streets are wide enough to admit a small cart or even a beast of burden ? So the filth remained ; it was partly washed away by the rain, while the rest settled by the constant traffic. Occasionally holes had been filled up with stones, and so the streets are higher now than the houses.

The houses are nearly all alike, and all seem poor and decayed, even desolate. There are good reasons for that. The Tunisian officials and dignitaries, from the Prime

Minister down to the common soldier, took every opportunity to oppress and rob the Jews. They need only hear that this one or the other possessed great wealth to be after him at once for the purpose of confiscating his fortune for the paltriest of reasons, or to extort as many thousands of piastres as they thought he was worth. The Jews had therefore to hide their wealth, which, doubtless, was very great, as much as possible, and this reason contributed to their leaving their streets in this dreadful state. There is an end of this to-day, and the Jews build their houses on the Marina and in the European quarter.

But for all this the Hebrews are very religious here : they keep their festivals conscientiously, and are attached to their religious service. Strange are their pilgrimages to Jerusalem, which seem as holy to them as those of the Moslems to Mecca. Every year a number of pious Jews leave their homes to walk through the deserts of Tripolis and Egypt to Palestine. The difficulties and dangers of this endless journey do not prevent them wandering to the cradle of their race, there to end their days. Many go forth, but a few only reach the far-off goal, for the journey through the desert is too perilous. Rich Jews travel to Jerusalem by steamer and return in the same way to Tunis.

There are a great many synagogues in the Ghetto of Tunis, but most of them are poorly furnished and insignificant, scarcely to be distinguished from the ordinary houses. The entrances are small, half hidden ; the place where they worship lies deep under the earth, so that twenty or thirty steps have to be passed before it is

reached. On a level with the street is a gallery leading into the synagogue ; it is barred, and is intended for the women. These are not allowed to enter the synagogue itself. Many small lamps hang down from the ceiling ; along the walls run seats covered with straw, and in the centre is the raised platform for the rabbi, as is to be found in every synagogue. Saturdays bring much of life into these synagogues. Christians are allowed to be present at the service, and are even welcome, though the spectacle offered them here is not very flattering to the Jews. All the worshippers wear round their shoulders a broad white shawl with black stripes at the edges, and round the lower arm a black leather strap is wound. Very few are devout during the time of service ; some sing, others talk and laugh, and while the rabbi prays he looks about him in so indifferent a manner that it has always been a puzzle to me how the Tunisian Jews could possibly be called pious. To me the synagogue seemed exchange, dancing-room, and coffee-house at the same time, and the hour of prayer anything but edifying. Only for one moment, towards the end of service, did they interrupt the uproar, and also silenced the boys who were running about the whole place. I was told afterwards it was the moment when the rabbi gives absolution to his flock for their sins for a whole month, a custom which probably exists nowhere else amongst Jews. After this solemn moment, during which all those present embraced and kissed each other, they folded their shawls and leather straps and left the place.

Benevolence is one of the greatest virtues of Tunisian

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Jews. The rabbis, for instance, live exclusively by alms ; the sick poor are nursed by the Jewish community, and physician and medicines sent to their homes, as to this day the Jews possess no hospital in Tunis. Up to recent times everything concerning schools was in a very backward state. Only very lately an excellent school was founded by the munificence of the Jewish Baron Castelnuovo, a noble and high-minded man, who was formerly physician to King Victor Emanuel, and by the Austrian Baron Hirsch. The "Union Israélite" supports it, and eight hundred children are instructed there gratuitously. They also begin to dress those children in the European style. There is a second school which was founded by the London Society for the Conversion of the Jews, and which is very well administered by the English missionary, Frankel; four hundred children are taught there, of whom about one hundred are girls; all of these show great talent for languages and a great wish to learn. They study amongst other things the New Testament and the Christian religion, and the parents have no objection to it. Whether this arises from religious indifference, or the consciousness that the Christian doctrines will not make any deep impression, but that the secular instruction only will be listened to, I cannot tell, but I presume the latter.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE JEWISH WOMEN OF TUNIS.

I HAD already made the acquaintance of some Jews, to whom I expressed my wish to see their families and their homes. They seemed highly pleased and proud that a European wished to visit them. Had they not suffered from the oppression and abuse of their fellow-creatures for centuries, and does not their quarter remain untouched by the foot of the faithful to this day? They feel that amelioration can only come from Europeans, so they cling to the "Rumi" (Christian). They took me through the Ghetto of Tunis. The houses there differ from Moorish ones by always being open; women and children sit about on the steps, all in a strange and, according to European ideas, indecent negligee; through the grated windows I spied many a pretty girl's face, not yet fat and puffed up like the women. The dirt of the streets and the miserable look of the whole quarter do not give us the idea of cleanliness, but these women look like pretty women on a dunghill. Their tight-fitting trousers and their stockings are snow-white, face, hands, and neck scrupulously clean, and their houses swept and scrubbed. Let us enter one of these houses. They are very much



A JEWISH FAMILY.

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like the Moorish ones, and also built by Moors. Through a narrow corridor we reach a small glass-covered or open yard, surrounded by windows and doors on every side. In better houses colonnades or galleries run round every floor, in poor ones only wooden balconies. Every house is inhabited by several families, who each live on a flat, sometimes on one side of the flat only, so that scarcely more than one sitting-room and two or three sleeping-rooms fall to the share of each, all these rooms being exceedingly small. The walls of the yard, as well as the yard itself, are covered with the small tiles glazed and painted often mentioned before, and which in rich houses also cover the walls inside up to the ceiling.

In the house of my Jewish cicerone (guide) there lived eight families, all more or less related. The different doors all stood wide open, for the few small windows did not give sufficient light. The women saluted me with a friendly smile, while they murmured their "Assalaum," and touched their lips with their fingers. When I entered my friend's sitting-room, his wife was sitting on a bed in rather a loose attire, and was suckling a boy. I wished to withdraw quickly, but the wife, a young woman of some twenty years, pretty, but rather stout, looked at me with such an innocent smile, and seemed to be so little concerned about her deficient toilet that my shyness was overcome, and I complied with the husband's invitation to sit down on the low divan. Soon the room filled with the other ladies of the house, who stood before me in the costume of ballet-girls or crouched on the floor. Face to face with such a phalanx of female beauty—for they were

stood before me stiff and trembling as if I had sent through them an electric current. If one of them has to leave the town for some time, or if he has to make a sea-voyage, the old women pour water after him. If a welcome guest arrives, they break some vessel on the sill. There are a great many other similar usages of the same kind proving their superstition.

I found in several houses two or more women in the same dwelling. At first I took them for sisters or relations, but later I found out that they were all the legitimate wives of one and the same man. Polygamy is no more the custom amongst Tunisian Jews than amongst Moslems, because few only possess the means for so costly a luxury. We have seen the price of a pair of pantaloons, and the *grandes dames* here change these as often as fashionable ladies in Europe. A real Mormon marriage, then, is rarely found in Tunis; but if found, it does not seem to be disturbed by quarrels or jealousy. The Jews marry when they are almost children; the glow of love is over at a time which we consider the best time of youth, and matrimonial happiness turns into Platonic friendship when they are in the flower of manhood, and womanhood. Separations are rare amongst Jews. The love for parents and children, and family ties in general, are considered holy; and if the moral standard is not a high one notwithstanding—if, on the contrary, whole streets and even quarters swarm with Jewish houses of ill-fame, the reason has to be sought in the poverty and misery from which the greater number of Jews still suffer. The Jews increase much faster than the Mohammedans; families

nificence and splendour that it baffles description. Her face was covered with a gold-embroidered veil, but the dimensions of her neck reminded us at once of the artificial fattening. The gold-brocaded upper-garment reached down to the hips. Her legs were encased in velvet pantaloons, tight and heavy, which were covered with gold braid and reached down to the ankles. She wore red silk stockings, her feet resting on gold-embroidered slippers, their heels just touching the middle of her sole. Her hands rested on her knees, her fingers being entirely covered with diamonds, and dyed down to the second joint with henna.

Round her sat the cousins and aunts of the numerous family in the most eager conversation. In a corner stood the master of the ceremonies in his becoming Jewish costume, but without a cloak—this was nobody less than the bridegroom's barber. At Jewish weddings the barber<sup>1</sup> is just as indispensable as bride and bridegroom. He conducts the festivities, gives good advice to the young couple, and introduces them to conjugal life.

The house where we found ourselves encircled, like all other Jewish houses in Tunis, a yard covered with marble slabs and surrounded by colonnades, in the centre of which stood a pretty fountain. Here stood the Oriental musicians with their taburka and their two-stringed violin, and serenaded the bride. This over, her future father-in-law took her by the hand and led her into the yard, where they had put a heavy gilt easy-chair on a table; with the help of a chair the bride mounts this

<sup>1</sup> Who, however, does not shave beards, but heads.

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improvised throne. The barber then pushed a small cushion under her, put her feet on it, and her hands on her knees in the manner of old Indian idols, and arranged her dress. In the meanwhile the bridegroom had put himself next to the table ; he was dressed like a European, and carried a white handkerchief in his hand. The rabbis—venerable figures with long white beards—sang a few songs, and the lawyers drew out of their pockets a scroll of parchment on which the marriage contract was written, and which they read out in a nasal tone ; while this was going on the barber handed wine round to put the guests in a proper frame of mind. The contents of this marriage contract constitute a singular document. Name and position of those about to marry have no place in it. It treats principally of the fortune on both sides, of the presents, their value, appearance and weight ; this latter, calculated with the utmost exactitude. And as it is very easy with Tunisian Jews to get a separation, the husband having only to explain before two witnesses that she is no more his wife, the sum of indemnity to be paid to the wife in such a case is mentioned and fixed in this contract. The bride's father tries to enlarge this sum as much as possible, for, as a rule, this clause binds the marriage tie much more effectually than any laws could do it. After the reading of the contract, the barber takes the white silk handkerchief from the hands of the bridegroom and wraps them both up in it while the rabbi murmurs some sentences. After this the bridegroom takes a ring from his finger and puts it on the right hand of the bride. This is the signal for a general shout of joy,

which drowned the music entirely. The married couple are now taken out of their white wrapper, and the bride takes off her veil for the first time. We stood right opposite her, and had the best opportunity to observe her truly beautiful features, unfortunately somewhat spoiled by paint and excessive fulness. While the screaming of the women still lasted, the barber filled a bumper with Marsala and offered it first to the parents of the young couple, then to the rabbis and the lawyers. Finally the barber emptied it and smashed it at the feet of the bride. This is done on account of the "evil eye," of which the very superstitious Jews are always afraid. Now the bride was taken down from her throne and conducted to the upper floor to receive the congratulations of the guests. The bridegroom, on the other hand, returns with the barber to the house of his parents to be congratulated by his own friends. By his side stood the barber with a little basket, into which each guest drops one or more gold pieces as a contribution to the bridegroom's outfit. After sunset all the guests assemble again in the house of the bridegroom, where sweets and refreshments are offered again in abundance till at last a rich supper is served, first to the men, then to the women separately, while the Arabian musicians make a horrible noise which they call music. Towards eleven at night we got up to fetch the bride from her home. Torch-bearers and musicians accompanied the wedding procession. After having serenaded the bride, she is conducted down by the bridegroom's parents, and the procession forms again. The barber walks in advance with a cake and a jug of water, as the bride is

not allowed to eat from her husband's table till the marriage is consummated. Behind the barber come the torch-bearers, and in the midst of them the servants with the wedding presents—as dresses, linen, jewellery, and plate. All these gifts come from near relations, whereas, contrary to European usage, friends need not make any presents. Next came the bearer of a large easy-chair, and preceded by yet another set of torch-bearers in picturesque costumes, the bride came at last, the matrons tottering by her side in dresses covered with gold lace. The guests brought up the rear. At some weddings it is still the custom that the bride on the way to her husband's house makes two steps backwards after each three steps in advance; this is meant to indicate how reluctantly she leaves her parent's house. In this case this grief was expressed by the procession stopping at every hundred yards, the bride sitting down each time on the easy-chair, mentioned before, resting a few minutes with her face turned towards her parents' house. It was nearly one o'clock in the morning before we reached the bridegroom's house again. The moment the bride set foot on the threshold, amongst the repeated shouts of the women and during the burning of incense, the barber again threw a jug at her feet, which broke into little pieces. The bridegroom expected her on the top of the stairs in a dressing gown of gold brocade, and put his foot for a moment on hers, as a sign that from now she is put under his guidance. He then led his bride to a kind of throne, seated on which they now both received renewed congratulations. And this concluded the festivities of the day. Before leaving

the house, we peeped into the bridal chamber, where we saw two four-posters splendidly furnished and hung with yellow silk curtains. The bride, however, is not allowed to enter this room on that day.

We visited the young couple again on the next day, and found them in different costumes, as rich and as beautiful as those of the day before, and surrounded by young married ladies, who did the honours. There exists a custom that on this day all brides married the same year take their whole wardrobe to the newly-married lady and change their toilet from hour to hour: no easy task, considering the great number of their garments, and their corpulence and awkwardness. Nevertheless vanity overcomes the difficulty. In front of the bridal couple the musicians sat again performing on the drum and hurdy-gurdy, a treat they had enjoyed since early dawn. Before them on a table stood a basket, which the guests filled gradually with gold and silver coin. The guests came and offered their congratulations and partook of refreshments, consisting principally of fruits, ice, and Oriental liqueurs. So the married couple remained sitting till late at night, when, as soon as the last guest had departed, they retired under the guidance of the barber, whose most important functions now began. For the bride the spell was now broken, and she was allowed to talk again. However, the festivities were not yet over, but continued for a whole week. For instance, on the first Thursday after the marriage the young wife has to perform the ceremony of sacrificing a raw fish. The guests assemble, and the parents of the bride present on a tray a living

fish, which the bride has to decapitate with one cut. There are many other similar customs partly originating in superstition, partly in habit, which we cannot mention here.

The above details are sufficient to show the originality of the habits and customs of the North African Jews. All the tribes represented in Tunis have similar peculiar customs, but it is almost impossible for a Christian to be admitted to witness them.

## CHAPTER XIII.

A CHAPTER ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT OF  
THE GOVERNMENT.

WE have already given a good many details about the machinery of the Government of Tunis which may have surprised our readers ; we shall attempt here to give an insight into the sources of revenues which barely keep this rotten State going. In this country, without newspapers and without books, information can only be gathered by word of mouth. The Bey has hitherto not allowed the publication of European newspapers—and perhaps rightly so—and the only Arabian paper, an official paper called *Rayel el Tunisie*, contains nothing but panegyrics of the First Minister and his creatures, and long lists of promotions and appointments ; and has the one object of excusing or contradicting deeds of violence, which the former barber and present Minister Mustapha ben Ismail commits only too often. Up to the year 1877 there existed a *Ennushat-ul-Khairia*, a kind of Tunisian *Almanac de Gotha*, which was printed in Italian. From reasons unknown this ceased to be published after 1877.

The origin of their national debt, this most important innovation copied from Europe, is to be found in the

re-establishment of the ancient Roman aqueduct, which was undertaken by a French company with the object of providing the capital, which till then had only rain-water in cisterns, with fresh spring-water from the mountains of Zaguan, forty English miles distant. They thought they had discovered so productive a gold mine with this first loan that a second and third soon followed ; this of course weakened their credit, and the interest had to be raised till it soon reached twelve per cent, which yearly represented such a sum that the total revenue of the State did not cover it. At last dire necessity compelled them to put their finances in order. The creditors most interested were in England, France, and Italy, and these powers arranged in 1869 that a financial commission should be appointed, with a financial inspector proposed by France, and a Tunisian committee named by the Bey. This commission exists to this day. It is their function to fix the amount of the public debt, to name all branches of public revenues which can be yielded to creditors ; finally, to collect taxes, and to prevent the further emission of treasury bonds, which had fallen to five per cent. The history of the latter is yet so fresh in the memory of those interested that it is scarcely necessary to refer to this amusing little story, which was sad enough for the country itself.

Besides this financial commission a central committee was appointed, which the English, Italian, and French creditors nominated to control the financial commission in their turn. In 1870, soon after the instalment of these bodies, it was found that the national debt amounted

to 160,000,000 francs, the interest to 19,500,000, and the total revenue of the State to 13,500,000. The expenditure of Government, even if cut down to the lowest, never cost less than 6,500,000, so that it was clear the Government could not meet its liabilities ; this led in 1870 to the conversion of all the loans into one united debt at five per cent, but notwithstanding this only sixty to seventy per cent were paid on the coupons. Most of the revenue had to be transferred to the Consul of Administration, who leases them in his turn, by auction, to the highest bidder. The taxes for the most important product—the oil—are collected by the Tunisian local authorities, but must also be paid into the creditors' treasury. Some of the revenues were given over to the Government to pay its expenses—for instance, head-money and tithes ; but neither the financial commission nor anybody else, with the exception of the First Minister, knows to how much these amount, as nothing is published about it. In case of a surplus it is divided into two halves, one for the extinction of the debt, the other for the Bey, who therefore often applies to the European commission for money. Towards the end of my stay in Tunis the Bey had just applied to the respective official for a small sum, I believe 1000 francs, without the strict cashier being able to comply with his wishes. The yearly income of the Bey amounts to 1,500,000 piastres, or 900,000 francs.

The administration of the country is in the hands of the Ministry and twenty-one district governors or Caids,

who again appoint deputies or Caliphs, whereas they themselves remain in the capital. We have seen in former chapters how these high functionaries perform their duties. Only in one respect they show a remarkable punctuality and perseverance, *i.e.* in the collection of taxes.

It is incredible to what degree this poor people, reduced by epidemics, emigration, and starvation, numbering in all 1,500,000, is oppressed and drained. The Mamelukes at the head of the Government exhibited a genius for inventing new taxes which would have done credit to a Yankee.

To begin with, every man in the State, from his seventeenth year up to the oldest age, has to pay a yearly head-money of 45 piastres (= 27 francs); every farmer has to give up a tenth of his harvest; an income-tax of one charoub (=one farthing) in the piastre is levied on every proprietor; a tax of one charoub is put on every transaction in the markets, etc. (with the exception of provision-markets); house-rent is taxed; leather and hides pay also a tax, and every olive—and palm—tree in the Regency is taxed, and these trees alone bring to the treasury 3,000,000 francs. The import and export duties are so high that they cannot afford them any more, which has a most pernicious influence on the future prosperity of the country.

Under these circumstances it is no pleasure to be a Tunisian, and emigration has therefore increased enormously during the last few years. This is generally directed towards Egypt and Arabia. It is to be hoped that the French will bring relief to this oppressed people,

for here they have an opportunity, as nowhere else, to do a great deal of good and to promote civilisation.

The only railways, which the country has possessed a few years, are the lines from Goletta to Tunis, and from Tunis along the Medcherda river towards the Algerian frontier, where they will join the railway there. The telegraphs are in the hands of the French Government, and the post in Tunis and in the principal ports of the Regency is administered by special French and Italian post offices, which are placed under the authority of the respective Consuls.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A COURT OF JUSTICE UNDER HIS HIGHNESS THE BEY.

IN none of the Oriental States bordering on Europe has the mediæval administration of justice been preserved in the same degree as in Tunis. There is here as yet no such thing as the calling of judge, but the governor of the province or the commander of a place is *ex officio* a judge ; it is immaterial whether the favour of the Bey has brought him out of a barber's shop, or whether he has beaten the drum all his life, or been employed in a bazaar. To be a judge is the highest aim of the whole Tunisian bureaucracy ; it not only puts them within reach of a large income from bribery, but it also saves them from falling into the hands of other judges ; it also gives them great power and influence.

A court of five judges has been introduced into the Turkish provinces long ago, but the Arabs seem to prefer a single judge, as he has only to bribe one instead of five, and so the Tunisian is better in this respect than his neighbour in Tripolis. According to the Koran the office of a judge belonged to a Kadi, and in religious matters to a Mufti, but the functions of the once almighty Kadi have been curtailed a good deal in Tunis. He still marries

people, pronounces separations, and does besides what in Europe a registrar would do, but his functions as a judge have been taken from him by the Caïds and the Governors of the town.

The highest judge in the land is the Bey himself. If anybody is dissatisfied with the judgment of a Caïd or of a provincial governor, he can appeal to the Bey; if two parties will not submit to the one-sided judgment of the Caïd, who may have been bribed, they travel to Tunis, even if they live in the most distant parts of the Regency, and put their case before the Bey. However he may judge, whether he is just or not, both parties are generally satisfied. They put the utmost confidence in the judgment of their ruler, and are seldom deceived. They themselves do not wish for another administration of justice, least of all for the European one, and when twelve years ago, urged by the European Consuls, the Bey was willing to grant a constitution, and wished at the same time to transfer the offices of judges to functionaries properly trained for it, it was the sign for a general armed rebellion, which ended by the Bey's withdrawal of the constitution and the re-establishment of the *status quo ante bellum*.

The judicial sittings of the Bey belong to the best points of this country, and show at the same time of what contradictions the Orient is capable. During all his life the Bey and his doings are withdrawn from the eyes of his subjects. Thick palace walls, barred windows, sentries, and watchful courtiers and ministers make it impossible for the ordinary Moslem ever to behold him. And even the highest functionaries or European dignitaries can

never be presented to the Bey, unless the almighty Prime Minister has been visited first, and is present at the audience. But at these public sessions, which are held every Saturday morning in one of the Bey's palaces, he is accessible to even the lowest of his subjects ; every one may lay his desires and his difficulties before his sovereign, and all are thoroughly convinced that the Bey will do them justice as far as human wisdom and power enable him to do. Mohamed es Sadock enjoys in this respect the best reputation with the natives as well as with the Europeans, and all the sentences I have heard, or which have been reported to me, show a sound judgment, and even something of that Solomonic wisdom which distinguished Oriental Caliphs centuries ago.

The first session I was present at took place in the palace of Goletta, where the Bey resided at the time. On the way from Tunis to Goletta we met a great many people already on their way to the palace : Moors and Turks in their picturesque garments, high dignitaries and military men in splendid uniforms covered with decorations ; thickly veiled ladies, wrapped in silk dresses, the unavoidable eunuch on the box of their handsome carriages ; finally, Bedouins and men from Barbary in their long, white bornouses, the gun on the shoulder, a couple of pistols in the belt, all riding on horses or donkeys. Here and there a Bedouin Sheik, or a Caid with a train of followers, was galloping about ; and surprised us all by the splendour of his dress or the beauty of his old Moorish arms. Goletta itself looks festive on these days. On the large place before the plain-looking palace

Arabs stand about in picturesque groups or lie down in corners together with their horses or camels. They have, perhaps, come a long way from the interior to settle an old dispute with a neighbour ; on the other side are some dozens of tents for the Zuanwas and Spahis, the irregular troops of the Bey. These martial figures, with their gold embroidered belts, into which pistols, yataghans, and scimitars are thrust, stalk about like field-marshals. Besides tents and arms they call nothing their own ; their income depends on the First Minister, but they look down upon the Bedouins and Kabyles for all that, because these latter are not richer, and have to pay heavy taxes into the bargain, whereas soldiers pay none. Inside the palace and on the broad staircase the crowd increases. On the landing-places the body-guard of the Regent is posted—giants in scarlet uniforms fringed with gold ; they carry scimitars and Saracen lances. Even the fez is trimmed with gold, and has instead of the blue silk tassel a bunch of white ostrich feathers. The whole household of the Bey is organised in military style ; upstairs in the anteroom of the judgment-hall aides-de-camp and courtiers stand about in rich uniforms, official and European drago-mans hurry to and fro. Every entering dignitary and Minister is received by the subaltern in having his hands kissed, and numbers of Arabs rush forward to show their reverence.

A slight movement in the midst of the picturesquely-grouped crowd betrayed the arrival of the almighty "Vezier el Kebir wa Vezier el Charadshia"—that is to say, the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs ; he

arrived in a richly-gilt carriage, drawn by mules, and accompanied by aides-de-camp on horseback. In private clothes, and his head covered only by the fez, anybody meeting the Grand Vizier on the Boulevards in Paris would take him for a tailor or for a man-servant, so commonplace is his appearance. But dressed in a uniform he improves considerably, the more so as these Moorish functionaries know how to make themselves respected and to behave like born princes however low their origin. I have had many an opportunity to notice this, not only in my intercourse with the Vizier, but also with other Ministers and Generals, of whom many were slaves or artisans in their youth. These Tunisian careers are as surprising and splendid as the American ones, only that they are not created by labour and genius, but by cunning, intrigues, and princely favour.

Immediately after the arrival of the Minister, blasts of trumpets announced the approach of the Bey himself. His carriage was also drawn by mules, which are considered aristocratic in Tunis, and mounted aides-de-camp in uniform, descended from the Bey's singular court of pages, accompanied him too, and stopped before the high gate of the palace. "The servant of the glorious God, he who puts all his trust in God, the Mushir Mohamed es Sadock Pasha Bey, possessor of the Kingdom of Tunis,"<sup>1</sup> stepped out of the carriage. The guards presented their sabres, the drummers beat the drums, and the whole assembly bowed most respectfully, touching chest, lips, and forehead with their hands, while the Bey ascended

<sup>1</sup> Official title of the Bey of Tunis.

the stairs accompanied by the Ministers who had received him ; and, after staying a short time in one of the offices, he entered the Court. Here he took a seat on a gilt throne of red velvet, which stood on a raised dais. On his left stood the princes of his house, with the exception of his brothers, including the heir to the throne ; on his right, the Prime Minister and Generals placed themselves, as well as the chiefs of division of the Ministries, and also the Secretary of State, with the clerks of the Court. In the background stood a company of the red body-guard. It was a singular, but magnificent sight. The Bey wore a General's uniform—a dark-blue coat with golden buttons, red trousers with golden stripes, the Turkish scimitar with a jewelled hilt, and the red fez on his grave and dignified head. On his breast sparkled the diamond stars of his decorations. The young princes, his nephews, looked less respectable : all had European private clothes and overcoats, with fez and blue tassels, and they all wore the collar of the Iftikar Order.

After this motley crowd of generals, Bedouin chiefs, Marabouts, sheiks, guards, and officials had somewhat arranged itself, a colonel of gigantic size entered (he was, we heard later, the chief of the police); he stepped into the empty space before the Bey, and, addressing himself to the noisy crowd in the ante-rooms, called out with a loud voice : "The Prince salutes you, and is here to render justice."

Immediately after a European, in a dress-coat and white tie, came forward and offered the Bey a tshibuk with a tube six feet long and set in diamonds ; after this

pipe was lit, and thin blue clouds enveloped the Bey like a gossamer veil, the first two litigants were brought forward. They remained standing about eight steps from the throne, bowed low, and touched their chest with crossed hands. First the one spoke, then the second defended himself, whereupon both broke out into such a bombast of words accompanied by wild gestures that it was only with the greatest trouble and perseverance the stout Bash-Chamba or colonel could stop them. The Bey murmured a few words, the Arabs again bowed low and walked away. Others came forward, the proceedings were repeated, and during the whole time the clerks went on scribbling with their wooden pens. Some couples behaved quietly, others screamed as if they were being roasted alive. The noise was always greatest when the judgment had been delivered. They beat their arms about, wanted to throw themselves before the Bey's feet, and it was with difficulty that the zaptiehs could remove them. As this want of respect and rebellious conduct astonished us very much we asked our dragoman for an explanation. He smiled and said: "You don't understand these good people, what they say are only exclamations of thanks and praise for the Bey's greatness and justice, in which both the accuser and the convicted one join."

Soldiers who brought their cases before the Bey were allowed to approach the throne within four steps; and though they also touched their chest, lips, and forehead, they did not bow. It also surprised us when the same soldier re-entered four times running. We supposed him

to be a great criminal, as he had to appear so many times at a single sitting, and asked this time the Minister of War what this *mauvais sujet* had done. But we were told that we were mistaken, and that it was only the sergeant who had to bring in the soldiers about to be judged. The same man had done this for the last fourteen years. We had wronged, therefore, this good man.

Only one woman was brought before the Bey. She was thickly veiled, and had to stand very far from the throne, having been brought in by policemen. But she did not manifest much fear before her sovereign, to judge by her loud talking and screaming. I have never seen another woman at these sittings, for they are only allowed to appear if they are directly implicated. Even as spectators, European ladies have been refused admittance.

The sentences delivered by the Bey consisted partly of fines, partly of punishment by imprisonment, and partly of the bastinado, for which, in Tunis, they have a special predilection. Some complicated cases were forwarded to the officials for further inquiry; in other cases, the Bey asked the Prime Minister by his side for details; and the parties in question, therefore, try long before the day of the sitting to put themselves in communication with the avaricious Vizier, and to get him on their respective side by bribes and flattery. But, generally speaking, the judgment of the Bey was clear and sound. The last case heard was a murder committed by Bedouins—father and son. The two criminals were brought in with their hands tied. The Bash-Chamba acted as prosecutor; the murderers pleaded guilty. The Bey emitted thick clouds

from his tshibuk, hesitated a long time, till at last he lifted his right hand slowly, with the palm downwards. Suddenly he turned it upwards, and this meant sentence of death. Without a word being said, the murderers were taken away by the zaptiehs. The Bey, evidently moved and restless, rose from the throne, the tshibuk was taken from him, and after bowing majestically in all directions, he walked slowly to his private apartments, followed by his Ministers. The Bash-Chamba had before this called to the crowd in a loud and drawling voice, the word, "El Afia!" (peace), whereupon everybody went slowly and quietly away. The sitting was over.

Meanwhile our dragoman beckoned to us to come and stand at a window. "If you wait here," he said, "you can see the execution at once." Scarcely two hundred yards from the palace, near to the shore of the El Bahireh Lake, we saw a high gallows, consisting of two posts and a cross-beam. Two ropes hung from the latter. The two criminals were taken into one of the tents of the irregular guards, and there undressed. Here they were allowed to say their prayers and to undertake the prescribed ablutions. Soon after we saw them walk to the gallows, followed by the executioner, dressed in scarlet, and by several policemen. Here the hangman took off all their clothes except a cloth round their loins, put a cord round their necks, and made a sign to the servants standing at the other end of the cord. These now dragged the two murderers four or five feet above the ground, and tied the cords to some pegs. The dangling about and the twitching, lasting several minutes, was horrible, and we

were glad to get away. There was no military escort, and the two or three hundred Arabs who had followed the procession soon dispersed. After an hour the corpses were cut down, and galley slaves, chained together in couples, put them on a high bier and took them to the burial-place. Half an hour later the gallows had disappeared, the dead were buried, and all was over.

Though the mode of execution itself is more dreadful here than in Europe, the condemned have one advantage over their European colleagues—they are not exposed to the pangs of conscience and to the apprehension of death for days. Sentence of death is a very rare occurrence in Tunis, as the Bey, unlike his predecessors, is very loath to pronounce it. When he is compelled to do so, he spends the day in prayer, and is wholly inaccessible. Unfortunately, the Tunisian laws make no difference between manslaughter, perhaps committed under the influence of drink, and premeditated murder. Both are expiated by death, but only if the relations of the victim refuse to accept a sum of money as compensation. In the provinces, where such murders amongst the Bedouins are rather frequent, the murderer is put into the "Kottar," or he flies to a sacred and inviolable asylum, which are generally to be found near the graves of holy Marabouts. There the relations of the murdered treat with those of the murderer, and are often satisfied with a compensation of a few hundred piastres. An ancient law, dating from heathen times, fixes the sum with the Kabyles and Chumairs at 600 to 800 piastres, which has to be paid by

the murderer to the community—that is to say, to the head of their tribe. At the same time, his place of abode is destroyed, his goods confiscated, and he himself driven away. But with this the law has been satisfied only, not the family of the murdered one. In Barbary they carry out Corsican revenge, and only the death of the murderer or of one of his family will satisfy the family of the murdered. And these laws are so strict that if there is no man in the family, the wife of the murdered man, for instance, would make a bargain with another man, and even marry him, if necessary, to have the murder of her husband revenged.

In Tunis the Bey alone has the right to pronounce sentence of death. The mode of execution depends on the nationality of the condemned. The Turks possess to this day certain privileges dating from their power in former days ; they and their children, descended from Moorish mothers, the Kuluglis, are strangled by a silk rope dipped in soap-water ; the Moors are decapitated, and the nomadising Bedouins are hanged, while the Jews, who formerly were drowned, also enjoy now the doubtful privilege of being hanged.

As the Bey of Tunis changes his residence very often, and lives sometimes in one palace and sometimes in another, a court of justice exists in each. But there is one exception. In Hammam-en-Linf, a watering-place a few miles from Tunis, there is no room large enough to allow of a public court, so a large tent is built on the downs along the sea-shore, and here the Bey sits in judg-

ment every Saturday. The downs, usually deserted, unfold on these days a very lively and bustling scene. Not only do the Moors, the Court, and citizens come to Hammam in carriages, and mounted on camel and horse back, but the Arabs come from all parts of the country, and for them tents have to be erected, which are grouped picturesquely round the large tent of the Bey. The numerous caravans, the animals for riding, the encampment with primitive kitchen apparatus, the many singular forms moving to and fro, all show us the Orient in its true character.

A strange incident occurred some years ago during one of these judicial sittings. A Moor approached the throne silently holding a large sack in his hand, out of which rolled two human heads bleeding, one a man's, the other a woman's. The Bey looked first at the heads, then at the Moor, and without saying a word made the sign which meant acquittal. It was simply a husband who had discovered his wife was deceiving him. In his excitement he made use of his ancient traditional right to kill her and her lover, and presented himself the very same day before the Bey to confess his deed, not in words, but more significantly by showing the heads of the transgressors. The Bey had to respect the old traditions, and acquitted him. Since then no such case has happened. Not because Moorish women are more virtuous, but because deceived husbands prefer, supported by the law, to sell their wives to their seducers, and thereby gain two ends—get rid of a bad wife, and in return get a good sum of money.

## CHAPTER XV.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND THE STATE OF  
PRISONS IN CAPITAL AND PROVINCE.

NEXT to the Bey the Caids and provincial governors have the highest judicial power. On account of the large bribes offered to judges these functions are very profitable, and for that reason the Bey and the Prime Minister generally give them to their favourites, who usually fill another office at Court as well. They live in the capital, visit their provinces very rarely or never, and are represented by Vice-Caids or "Chalifs." These judge arbitrarily, but have to deliver to their chiefs part of the bribes, which sums have therefore to be twice as large as if the Caid delivered judgment himself. Those, then, who wish to make use of a judge's wisdom prefer to travel to Tunis and apply to the Caid directly instead of having anything to do with the Caliph. If it is kept in mind that some provinces like Susa or Sfax are two days' journey from Tunis, an idea can be formed of the discomfort of this administration of justice. In Susa and Sfax the Caids are two Syrians, who in their youth were slaves, and who, partly through their own skill, partly through the favour of princes and ministers, rose to be directors of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These places alone bring in large sums of money. If their salaries as provincial governors are added, and their bribes as judges, it is not to be wondered at that they are millionaires. It is carried even so far that the Prime Minister Mustapha ben Ismail not only limits the Caids to the sums they rob, and pockets their salaries, but he sells the office of Caid to the highest bidder. This happened only last year with the Caid of Mater.

The farther the province from the capital, the mightier and more independent is the Caid, and he is more of a reigning despot than a provincial governor. The capital of Tunis forms a district by itself, and as a rule the governor is a military man of high rank, as is the case just now. Through the immediate neighbourhood of the Court and Ministers, his power and sense of justice is often influenced to their advantage, but in police courts and insignificant cases he generally passes appropriate judgments.

The "Ferik" or governor of the town sits daily in a small hall of the Dar el Bey of Tunis during two or three hours to judge the misdemeanours of the day, and to investigate heavy crimes, and has afterwards to lay the *resume* before the Bey. The whole proceeding is as unsophisticated as if this capital of the Regency of Tunis were in the interior of Persia or Mesopotamia. The Ferik is dressed like a general, but without arms, and sits with crossed legs on a divan running the whole length of the room. He is one of the best-known personages in Tunis. In his youth he was famous for his enormous

strength, and it is said of him that he overpowered a large panther by the strength of his arms alone without any weapon whatever. To-day he is old and decrepit, and while the sitting lasted he sat motionless on the divan. The room opens into a large glass-covered yard where the executions take place before the Ferik. If, for instance, a criminal is arrested in the afternoon, he has first to undergo an examination before a police functionary, who is the adjutant of the Ferik. He is afterwards taken to prison, which is also in Dar el Bey below the court. Now it must not be imagined that Tunisian prisoners are treated anything like European ones. The prisoners are all put together into one and the same dungeon-like hole, and do not leave it again till they are either taken before the judge or liberated. They are not allowed to leave this room under any circumstances, so the state of it may be imagined. In this prison there are neither beds nor wooden planks, so that the prisoners must eat and sleep on the damp floor. They receive from the Government daily a loaf of bread and fresh water; other food and clothes they may obtain from their relations, with whom they can communicate through the large iron bars of the prison walls. The women are housed in a different place, but are treated in the same way as the men.

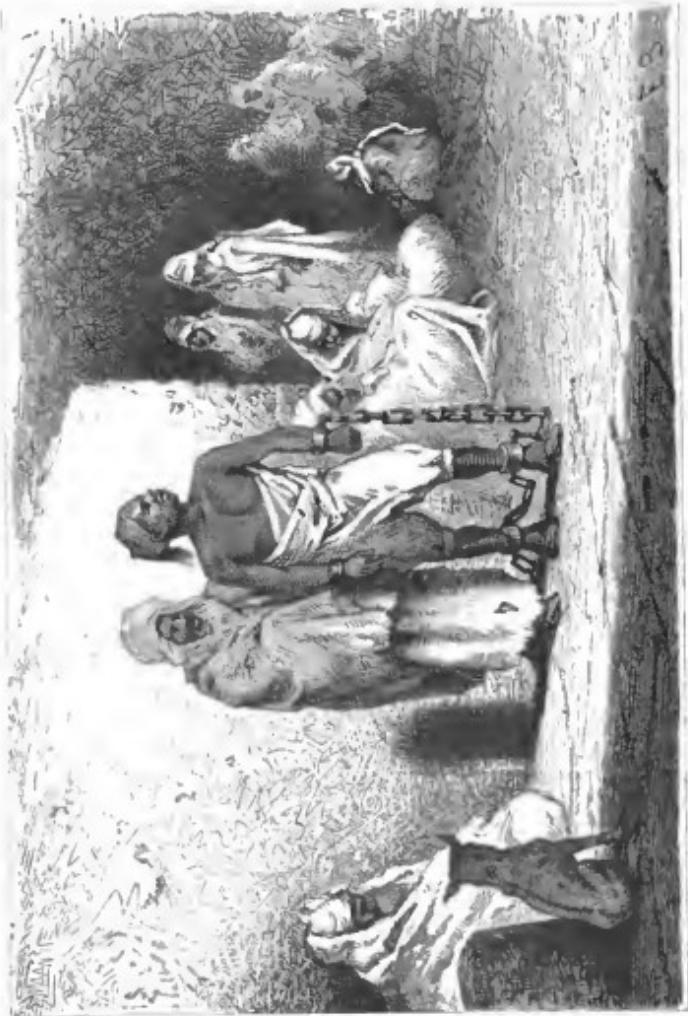
In these prisons they remain till taken before the Ferik, who decides their cases. I have several times witnessed this simple proceeding. A couple of zaptiehs or policemen bring the prisoners in; the "police-colonel" reads the accusation from a little bit of paper, for business books of any kind are unknown in the Orient; the Ferik

asks the accused several questions, listens to his defence, and convicts him, sentencing him to prison, fine, or bastinado, according to the state of his finances. Great criminals are sent to the galleys.

Next to fines the bastinado is the most frequent punishment, and a criminal gets rarely less than one or two hundred strokes. Even five to eight hundred are nothing extraordinary. As soon as the Ferik has pronounced the number of strokes, policemen rush forward and drag the prisoner into the yard. Here he is thrown down and bound. Two zaptiehs put his naked feet through the noose of a cord fastened in the wall, and tighten it to such a degree that his feet stand up almost perpendicular and show his soles. Two sergeants now come forward with cudgels and belabour the soles in a most cruel manner until the number of strokes is reached. Then the poor fellow is untied and set free. Those who had received five hundred and more strokes generally bled very much, and had to be carried away by their friends, of whom some are always amongst the spectators. But what surprised me was to see some of those who had received one or two hundred strokes limp away quickly, with a sour face it is true, but apparently not much hurt. But the reason of this was explained to me afterwards by my dragoman. The bastinado is one of the policeman's most prolific sources of income ; his pay by the Government being only nominal, he has to get what he can by bribery. As soon as anybody is sentenced to be bastinadoed, his first step is to treat with the police about the sum to be paid for lenient treatment. The bargain is

settled before the first stroke falls, and this explained the fact why the one who probably was poor remained helpless on the floor after the punishment, whereas the other, perhaps richer, seemed to walk off with little discomfort.

When the sentence is executed, other prisoners are brought forward, and the whole proceeding is carried on with the utmost precision and quickness. One case which came under my observation is too characteristic not to find a place here. One evening I accompanied Mr. Smith, an English friend, home to his house on the "Marina," where I took leave of him. I had scarcely left him when I heard a tumbling noise, followed by two shots, coming from the house. Immediately after two Arabs rushed out of it and ran away. One was gone in a minute, but the other fell down after a few steps and remained motionless. As I went back to ask the cause of all this, Smith came out of his house, excited, and the smoking revolver in his hand. He had caught the two, who had entered his house by the flat roof, in the act of carrying away some valuable property of his. On Smith entering one rushed at him with a yataghan, but Smith anticipated him by two well-aimed shots from his revolver. We hastened to the guard-house to report what had happened. And there it ended for the moment. Some days later I attended the court again at which the Ferik presided. After having witnessed some convictions, I noticed an agitation amongst the people standing in the yard, and a policeman making his way through the crowd, carrying a wounded man on his back. Arrived before the Ferik, he dropped his load on the stony floor before him.



GALLEY SLAVES IN GOLETTA.

I recognised in the wounded man the Arab who had broken into Smith's house. As the law demands that every prisoner must be examined personally, and as the Ferik either would or could not go to the hospital, they simply took the prisoner on their shoulders and carried him to the court to hear his sentence, though he had two bullets in his body. The man was severely wounded and unconscious.

The galleys of Tunis are particularly severe. The Bey is probably the only prince whose galley-slaves are part of his suite. If the Bey resides in Goletta, the prisoners are taken there ; if he moves to the Bardo, they are moved to the Bardo too. The reason is, that they are employed to do the hard work in houses and streets, so that they must be near when repairs are necessary in or around the palace. The same is the case with the Ministers and favourites, who make use of the galley-slaves when their private houses want repairing, or when pavements want looking to, or for any other such purpose, but the prisoners are always chained together in couples.

But the galley-slaves are not the worst off, for they at least know their fate. Provided with my "firman," which opens every door, I one day, in company with two German officers, visited the prison in the Bardo. Energetic and repeated threats were necessary to induce the jailer to allow us to enter, and even then he only opened the door sufficiently to let us and our dragoman pass. Behind us the door was immediately bolted, and we found ourselves in a large space with two or three hundred prisoners.

This jail had some wooden planks, on which some of the prisoners were lying. Others crouched on the floor, and jumped up when we entered to approach us. We heard from them that they were all prisoners awaiting their trial ; some had been here these three years, and seemed to have been forgotten by the authorities. They receive daily two small loaves and water. In one respect they are better off than European prisoners : their friends and relations may visit them at all times. The cause of this is not so much to be sought in humanity as in the gratuities the friends have to pay the jailer, and in the provisions which they bring to the prisoners, which saves the Government providing for them. Many a one languishes here who was in the way of some one in power, and could not be got rid of by any other means. The Bey has evidently no knowledge of this state of affairs, or with his well-known sense of justice he would have abolished it long ago ; but in this country, without a press, the Ministers manage very well to hide their evil deeds before the eyes of the ruler.

But this judicial arbitrariness is more cruel still in the country. In provincial towns the prisons are perfect pest-houses, and the turnkey of the jail in Mater, for instance, told me himself that the prisoners are kept alive by their relations, and when they have none, by the alms of the passers-by, of whom they beg in a truly heartrending way. During the day I used to see them at the barred windows of the prison waiting till somebody handed them a piece of bread or a drink of water. If the relations of the prisoners can get together a sum of money, they can buy

them off, and this money the Caid or Chalif squanders with his dancing girls and harem boys. During my stay in Mater I had the opportunity to get an insight into the behaviour of these vampires. I lived on the farm of a European whose head shepherd came to me crying one day, and asked me to help his brother-in-law. This latter had been imprisoned by the Chalifa of the town, because some men who were his enemies accused him of having committed murder. The family of the murdered man wanted 500 piastres compensation, and the Chalifa 500 more. Though the man could prove an alibi, the "shaush" or beadle had arrested him, and the payment of the money was insisted upon. The whole town was convinced of the man's innocence, but under such lawless and despotic sway, nobody dared to raise a voice for him. I promised to do my utmost. A day or two after I had communicated with the First Minister, through the Bey's second dragoman, the Chalifa was cited to Tunis, the prisoner was at once liberated, and the Chalifa sentenced to pay to the Minister a fine of several thousand piastres. But as soon as the Chalifa had returned to Mater, he extorted from his subalterns an extraordinary contribution under pretence of having to send it to the Minister. A part he kept for himself, the rest he sent to the Minister, and the sufferer was again—the people.

Under these circumstances, every inhabitant of the Regency tries, of course, with all the means in his power, to renounce Tunisian jurisdiction, and to put himself, under some pretence, under the protection of a foreign Consulate. The Tunisian authorities have no power

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whatever over Europeans, or those protected by foreign Consulates ; and the respective Consuls try all their misdemeanours and crimes, as well as those of the other colonists. More important Consulates, like the Italian one and the French, have amongst their officials their own magistrates, who judge according to the laws of their respective countries ; the other Consuls are most of them lawyers themselves. To get rid of Tunisian justice these Mohammedans prove a real or imaginary descent from Europeans ; in most cases the Spanish Moors have to serve as ancestors, and the Spanish Consulate has to undertake the protection. What documents could not do, money had to accomplish, and so the lists of every single Consulate show many hundred Mohammedan subjects who are genuine Tunisians, but do not wish to be either judged or taxed by their own Government. As a rule, they are the richest people in the Regency, and have to fear most from the ministerial harpies. This accommodation on the part of the Consuls deprives the Ministers of their best sources of income, but it also deprives the State of ratepayers, so that the deficiency has again to be made up by the poorer part of the population. And the power of the Consuls is very great in other respects. They are masters and protectors of several thousands of subjects, and besides this, territorial rights and privileges are attached to their houses, their landed properties, and to those of their "subjects," so that they quite form a State within the State. That some of these gentlemen not very long ago imitated the Tunisian authorities, and did not object to show themselves obliging for a consideration, is

neither here nor there, for at present we only speak of Mohammedan administration of justice. Moreover, there is no doubt that this state of affairs is fast disappearing, and there is even less doubt that, with the French occupation, Tunisian administration will take a turn for the better.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## WANDERINGS IN THE ENVIRONS OF TUNIS.

THERE is no tree to be seen in the capital of the old Moorish empire. A small square near the "Kasba," and a few single palm-trees excepted, which reach over the roofs of the houses, there is no refreshing green to be found within its walls, and it is incomprehensible how the Arabs could call this "the Green Town." The "dirty" or "dark" would have been much more appropriate.

But this deficiency is partly made up by the surroundings of the town. Though there is neither bush nor tree in the immediate neighbourhood of Tunis, there are roads like the one leading to the Bardo, planted with shady acacias, and after a walk of half an hour we reach extensive olive woods covering all the hills south of the town. Shady resting-places, beautiful views, the two lakes, and the distant picturesque outlines of Dchebel Bu Kornein, Dchebel Ressas, and Dchebel Saguan are well worth a visit; but it has never entered the head of anybody in this country without enterprise to erect a restaurant, or at least an Arabian café, and so create a resting-place for the 30,000 Europeans of Tunis in their walks.

I often rode up to these olive woods in good and pleasant company, and I do not remember a single view in the whole East which offered a more delightful picture. But this can only be said of the total impression, for in its details the neighbourhood of Tunis is rather desolate. The bare, yellowish green hills immediately outside the walls of the town are covered with forts and batteries. If you leave



ARABIAN CEMETERY.

the gates guarded by sentries for the open country, you are in the midst of graves; and except in the European quarter, there is not a single building outside the town; all the ground for many hundred yards round being covered with tombstones and mortuary chapels, a sad and dispiriting spectacle. The walls are in ruins, the roads covered with fragments of stone, and the tombstones overgrown with thistles and weeds. The only change in this

wilderness are the "Kubbas" of the saints, cubical buildings crowned by cupolas. The 10,000 graves are all alike: a stone slab, six feet long and about one foot high, with either a tablet at the head, or a small stone column topped by a turban-like knob, according to the sex of the dead. The corpse is laid in a coffin, and at the funeral covered with costly materials; but, on arrival at the cemetery, it is taken out again, covered with a light garment only, and put in a very shallow grave. It is, of course, not allowed to bury non-believers there.

The family of the Bey possess, in the upper part of the town, their own mosque, which is their mausoleum, and in which all the rulers of the Hussein dynasty are buried to the present day.

There is generally before the gates of the town a large place, with fountains of stone, where the caravans and Bedouin tribes encamp before entering the town. For after sunset the gates are locked, and only by order of the Bey can they be opened at night, in case a distinguished traveller or Turkish dignitary arrives.

The lake of El Bahireh, which reaches up to the streets of Tunis, and is too shallow to swim and too deep to wade through, is the favourite abode of myriads of flamingoes, pelicans, and other water-birds looking for food on its marshy shores, and finding more than they want. All dirt and refuse of this large town is thrown into the Bahireh, which is therefore quite marshy, and exhales during summer miasms which get worse from year to year. Towards Goletta and the open gulf it gets deeper and

clearer. It would be easy to deepen the lake and to make the marshy little harbour on the Marina accessible to larger ships, but even the small sailing vessels going between Goletta and Tunis have a difficulty now to work their way through the swamp, and most of the traffic is carried on by rail. The small boats of the European sportsmen only traverse the surface in great numbers to hunt the marsh birds. In the midst of this lake is a little island, rarely noted on maps, with the ruins of an old Spanish castle ; the high tower, the crenellated walls, the strong casemates are still of use, and the French will no doubt one day, when Tunis is directly connected with the sea and this lake serves as a harbour for large merchantmen, bring back this old castle to its former destination.

Farther north-east, across the groups of houses of Goletta, stands a hill bare and red, without bush or tree, only crowned by a small group of buildings. It is the place where once Carthage stood ! To describe here the scanty remains of the thrice-destroyed city is superfluous, having been done so often before by pens more competent than mine. But I may be allowed to mention that, to all appearance, they have been better described than excavated, and there seems a large field left to the archæologist. During the last years Europe has occupied itself only with Asia Minor, Greece, and Egypt, and the discoveries there have made them forget the old Roman towns buried in ruins. Three towns lie in Carthage on the top of each other, one Byzantine, one Roman, and one Punic, and if Punic remains were found they were



RUINS OF THE AQUEDUCT OF CARTHAGE.

only those, no doubt, which were used by the Romans when they built their town—for there have been no excavations until now which ever reached the centre of the extensive hill apparently consisting of similar rubbish to the top.

Down there the town of Hamilkar has to be looked for, not above ground, and down there discoveries would probably be made which would surpass in importance all former ones on classical soil. It has not been tried till now, for Beulé, Davis, and other investigators have only scraped the surface, and yet they made discoveries rich and valuable. Much remains hidden under these ruins of thousands of years!

The ruins of Carthage visible to-day are not visited by the traveller on account of their size and beauty, which they do not possess, but because of the memories of historical events of which these ruins were the theatre—just as, when standing before the monument of a great statesman or poet you think first of him for whom it was erected.

All that remains are some baths with gigantic vaults, in which to-day cattle are grazing, and the enormous pillars of the Carthaginian aqueduct, next to which the Arabs build their miserable huts of clay. More interesting is the mausoleum of the Saint Lewis of France, guarded by learned monks, and the small archæological museum which was founded in the course of time.

From the cape, crowned by a lighthouse, a magnificent view is enjoyed of the whole gulf and peninsula, of which the cape is the farthest point. On the steep side of the hill towards the north, occupied by the picturesque Arab village Sidi bu Said, many of the Mohammedan dignitaries of Tunis have their secluded, elegant country seats. The inhabitants of Sidi bu Said have the reputation of being great fanatics, which is perhaps due to the Sheik ul Islam of Tunis who lives there, and to the mosque in which the famous saint is buried, after whom the village is named.

At the foot of this village expands a beautiful valley covered by gardens and palm groves, formerly the suburb Megara of Carthage, where the wealthy Tunisians have built their magnificent palaces. Ariane and Parsa are, however, the most coveted spots, where the Princes and

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high dignitaries have their country seats, as well as the European Consuls, who owe their charming villas to the munificence of the Regent. The most beautiful and imposing structure is the palace of the heir-apparent Sidi Ali Bey. It is surrounded by large magnificent gardens and orange groves, which extend down to the sea-shore, and contain the bathing establishment of the harem. Farther on, more inland, in the neighbourhood of the Bardo, is Manouba. Here, in the midst of this fabulous splendour of the Moorish grandees, the traveller finds his dreams of the East realised.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE QUARTER OF THE FRANKS AND THE EUROPEAN  
COLONIES.

BEFORE the eastern gate of the town, the so-called sea-gate, is the European quarter, which, though only consisting of a few streets, is the most beautiful and most pleasant part of this old, dingy town. From the gate mentioned above, a broad and imposing street extends to the shores of the El Bahireh lake and the harbour. Fine, stately mansions, most of them built during the last few years, form this street, called the "Marina," which almost reaches to the lake. This street contains European bazaars, large houses of business, hotels, the offices of the French Telegraph, the tobacco manufactory, the consulate with its large gardens, the European casino, and finally the cafés most frequented in the town, and it is ornamented with some shady groups of trees besides, and contains some public coffee gardens. On both sides smaller streets run into the Marina, also lined with beautiful buildings, and this latter ends in the Piazza Marina, the real centre of the European quarter. In the street running south are the Swedish, German, Austrian, and Spanish Consulates, as well as the shipping agents

and bank houses ; while the street north of the Piazza Marina contains the palace of the English Consul and many European business houses, and also the dwellings of the Italians and Maltese. Towards the west a third street lies between this place and the inner town, and there the Roman Catholic Church as well as a convent and the residence of the bishop are situated. Of all confessions, not Mohammedan, the Catholics have alone obtained the right to live within the walls of the Moorish town ; Jews and Protestants are obliged to have their temples and churches as well as their cemeteries outside.

The Piazza Marina is also the liveliest part of the whole town. Early in the morning camel caravans and troops of Bedouins move through the gate, and pass the Tunisian guard-house to reach the bazaars of the inner town ; a little later business people assemble to hear the news of the day in the different coffee-houses, and to read the despatches of the "Agence Havas" posted up here, and finally to hold a sort of exchange, for which no place is more appropriate. Moors and Bedouins are mixed with Europeans of all nations ; the "Kawasses" of the Consulates in gorgeous uniforms, the soldiers of the Tunisian army, the Jews, Cretes, and Albanians in their picturesque costumes, all form so rich and brilliant a mart of nations as is not to be found elsewhere. Towards noon the different groups disperse, and when the sentries are relieved the place is empty. But in the afternoon life returns, grander but calmer, outside the gate. The Marina is the Corso of Tunis, just as the Riviera di Chiaja is of Naples, or to keep to the East, as the Shubra Avenue is

at Cairo. The cafés are the first to fill, as the heat is still oppressive ; everybody tries to find a place under the fine trees of the French Consulate, and drinks the excellent mocha served here at only three sous per cup ; a cigarette of Tunisian tobacco heightens the enjoyment of the "siesta." Under the shady sycamores here all foreigners generally meet, and I think with pleasure of the pleasant hours spent here in the company of German friends. Arabs, Jews, Maltese, the highest and the lowest classes, sit here with thoroughly Oriental calmness under the same tree, and let the motley throng of promenaders pass them. Towards sunset the crowd gets denser, and then the carriages of the fashionable world appear with beautiful ladies, who show that a Southern sun has ripened them. The saluting, smiling, and flirting which takes place now reminds us more of the Corso in an Italian town than of the East without women. The European world in Tunis being very small, all know each other ; they meet in concerts and in theatres, at receptions and in the street, and though coteries, gossip, and enmities are more rife in Tunis than anywhere else, there is a very general outward show of politeness and amiability. To the uninitiated social life in Tunis may appear amusing and attractive, the more so on account of the kindness, almost friendship, exhibited towards strangers, and learned from the hospitable Orientals. But the more we learn to look behind the scenes the more the illusions disappear to which we may have yielded during the first weeks.

The Europeans who live in Tunis can only claim to be Europeans up to a certain degree, and the strange

customs and bad habits here exercise their influence all the more as good education and firmness of character melt like wax under the enervating sun of Africa. In dress and general appearance they remain true to their origin; this is already less the case in their manners and social intercourse, but in their home life they imitate the Orientals only too much. Though to all appearance Mohammedans are separated from Christians by an unsurmountable barrier, it would be astonishing to hear the peculiarities of the Tunisians of European descent, if this were the place to speak about them. Maltzan's archaeological work on Tunis contains an interesting chapter on this subject, and as the famous Orientalist has lived a long time in the Moorish town, his views, though very sharp, must be accepted as true. He says much of the dishonesty of the merchants and business people, of the ridiculous mania for titles and decorations in society and amongst the Consuls, and of the corruptibility and bribery to be found amongst some of them.

I think it better to pass this matter over without further remark, many as have been the observations made about it by travellers.

Perhaps the reader will be surprised to see the words theatre and concert in the above lines. There is indeed in Tunis a Philharmonic Society which gives concerts, and counts principally the Italian element amongst its members. There is an Italian opera, as well, performed in the tiniest house I have ever seen during all my travels. But they are not deterred by that from performing grand operas. The chorus, whether it has to represent an

army or a popular assembly, consists invariably of five gentlemen and four ladies, because of the want of space. The performances are not exactly on a level with Covent Garden, but having nothing better, the ten or twelve boxes and thirty stalls are always taken—in fact, it is *bon ton* to possess, besides carriage and riding horses, a box in this miniature theatre. It struck me as very strange when once on entering this temple of art; I saw the prima donna in her stage costume at the entrance with a plate in her hand. On the plate were several gold and silver pieces, the most unequivocal intimation to the visitors, for it was the prima donna's benefit that night.

At the theatre, and when the concerts take place, the traveller has the best opportunity of admiring the European ladies of Tunis. They well deserve their reputation for beauty, which their tasteful toilet enhances. Interesting faces, exuberant hair, glorious dark eyes, and beautiful forms—these latter unfortunately assuming ugly proportions in riper years—are to be found very generally.

The most numerous and also the most important colony, not only in the capital, but also throughout all the towns along the shore, is the Italian one. In their hands rests the greatest part of commerce, and in the society of the capital they are the favourites. They have well-administered schools, a hospital, a church, convent, post office, and other institutions, which in more than one respect are of use to the other colonies. The number of Italians living in the Regency is estimated at 30,000; next to them rank the English with from 15,000 to 20,000, but only about 200 amongst these are really Englishmen,

the rest are Maltese, who in their language and habits show much likeness with the Arabians, with whom they are on very good terms. The French colony and the Greek one are about equally numerous, the former being of course at the head of all in respect of influence. The events of this year have proved this sufficiently, and the newspapers have said so much about the French Consul and his work that it is superfluous to say more about him and his officials.

As I have said before, the position of Europeans in Tunis is a very favourable one. They are under the jurisdiction of their own Consuls, and this jurisdiction is handled in a very lenient manner. The representatives of the three largest colonies have their own magistrates ; but the other Consuls are diplomats, arbitrator, judge, and jailer, all in one person. During my stay in Tunis a murder was committed by a subject of a European power. What was to be done with the fellow ? Sentence him to death ? There was no hangman. Lock him up ? This Consulate contained no prison. The Consul had to ask his Government for instructions. As there was no communication by sea between that power and Tunis, the criminal would have had, in case of extradition, to be sent by an Italian vessel, at great cost, to the next harbour, and from there home by railway. Under these circumstances, and with the existing system of gratuities, it can be easily understood that matters are often winked at.



COLETTA : ENTRANCE OF THE HARBOUR.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE HARBOUR AND WATERING-PLACE OF GOLETTA.

IT was scarcely to be supposed that here, in Africa, one of the most modern of European institutions was to be found. It might be expected in Algiers, where a quarter of a million of colonists are settled ; but to find here in orthodox mediæval Tunis a much-frequented watering-place is almost a miracle. And Goletta is not only a watering-place and a favourite lounge of Moorish grandees, but it is also the harbour of the capital, where hundreds of ships arrive yearly. It is beautifully situated, and has gradually developed into a flourishing town—half of the inhabitants are Europeans, the other half being composed of native elements. Here is the seat of the Ministry of Marine, of the arsenal, and of the fleet of Tunis, all of which we have treated in a former chapter. Goletta is a thorough harbour town, with Italian and Maltese business houses, common dancing-booths, and inns. A majestic fort to the west separates the town from the fashionable part ; and the black iron cannons look threateningly towards the town, as if they were eunuchs watching the ladies of the harems bathing in the sea.

From the fort a low, narrow strip of land, not much

higher than a sand-bank, stretches northwards as far as Carthage, whose ruins cover several English square miles. The bay is surrounded by exceedingly lovely coasts, and the deep azure blue, which lends a special charm to the Mediterranean, adds to the beauty of the picture.

Dido already seems to have recognised the advantages of this place, or she would not have bought just that piece of land on which Goletta stands. The present Bey built also a pretty villa below the walls of his fort, and two thousand steps farther, another one for his harem. This was the beginning of Goletta, as a seaside place, about ten years ago. Both villas are on the sea-shore, and the consequence was that all the Ministers and Generals built villas here also. They liked the place, and laid out gardens and shady woods at great cost, built glass-houses, and changed this narrow strip of sand between Goletta and Carthage into one of the most amusing and charming of watering-places.

The first and last house belong to the Bey and his consort. The Bey is not very partial to ladies' society, all the more inconceivable in the midst of these Moorish ladies. But he is gallant for all that; and while he is satisfied with a villa built into the sea in modern Italian style, his first wife occupies a splendid palace, which stands on the site of the former harbour of Carthage. It is quite Moorish. The extensive structure is surrounded by magnificent gardens; and the ponds and reservoirs in them were the harbour reservoirs of the Carthaginians. The well-preserved walls are ornamented with palm-trees and bamboo and tamarind shrubs. The wife of the Bey

can descend into the sea direct from the palace—perhaps bathes at the very same place which Dido frequented. The archaeologists who have found out the most mysterious localities of Carthage have kept silent till now about Dido.

During the last few years Europeans have also chosen Goletta for a summer residence, though it is not the best European society which meets here. Tunis possesses in its European colony peculiar elements, whose laxities are partly owing to the influence of the Orientals, partly to the lawlessness and immorality which prevails here altogether. During the heat of summer the capital is unsupportable, so that everybody comes here. The knowing Prime Minister, Mustapha, who has had the whole ground up to Carthage given to him, encouraged this settlement of the Europeans, had villas built, and European houses at his own cost, and let them at high prices, so that he has an income of 200,000 francs a year from this watering-place alone. He had even an English pier built, where there are not only bathing-machines, but also a restaurant and a music pavilion. But this restaurant is the only one in the place, without cafés or hotels. Who, therefore, comes to Goletta must either hire a whole villa or must bring his tent and his provisions as for an African expedition. And such an encampment on the sea-shore is not as unpleasant as it may seem; it lends itself to all sorts of interesting adventures, for there are not only European families to be met, but also Arabian harems quartered in the same way.

The pier, here called "Rondo," is the centre of all life

in the place. Six artists produce daily a terrible noise, called Oriental music, on two-stringed violins, enough to make one forswear Tunisian watering-places for ever. But the Europeans who are settled here seem to be accustomed to it.

The great heat does not allow a very complicated toilet, so that the only garment ladies wear is a light sort of dressing-gown. They wear straw hats with broad brims, and carry large parasols ; their feet, without stockings, are covered by light open slippers, their hair, always thick and long, falls down over their backs, and a bracelet or a necklace is the only thing which reminds one of a European lady. In this costume, exchanged sometimes for a fashionable Trouville bathing-dress, these ladies pass all the summer. Husbands cannot possibly complain of exorbitant milliners' bills ; and ladies are satisfied, as nothing could suit them better. Men live a still more unconstrained and easy life ; many of the young Tunisian dandies live all the summer in a bathing-machine, sleeping there as well ; rain, or even a clouded sky, being unknown in Tunis during the hot season. It takes them half an hour by rail to go to town in the morning, and in the evening they return to Goletta. Only when the sun sets does life begin there, the unbearable heat keeping people in their houses during the day—the venetian blinds are closely drawn, and the curtains let down ; Goletta sleeps. On the other hand, night is changed into day, and very pleasant during full moon. Excursions are undertaken in carriages or on donkeys to the neighbouring watering-places ; or people rest on the soft sand deep in conversa-



SNAKE-CHARMERS.

tion. The ladies bathe at night ; and in long, wide garments they walk into the sea like ghosts.

But there is a time when the Arabian ladies of the harem enjoy plenty of liberty, when they empty the cups to the dregs and make up for the monotonous life of the rest of the year. In Egypt this opportunity occurs at the orgies of the fair of Tanta, orgies which are notorious for their immorality ; here, in Tunis, it is the festival of Aussa, which is celebrated at mid-summer, and offers plenty of amusement for the European on the look-out for adventures. But he must be able to speak Arabian or have a clever dragoman. The Arabians dedicate one day in the year to the sea, and their sacrifice to Neptune consists in their bathing together with their families, horses, or donkeys. According to an old superstition, this is to bring them luck. Long before the time comes all the jugglers, snake-charmers, dervishes, music bands, and narrators of fairy tales in the whole country, make the necessary preparations—erect tents on the shore, and stalls as well as movable cafés. This festival is kept throughout the whole Regency, but the principal point of attraction is the capital, because of its large number of inhabitants and of its wealth. The Moorish families from the inland towns as well as the Bedouins and the Kabyles, etc., wend their way to the coast, more especially towards Goletta, erect tents for their wives, and encamp themselves in the open air. Many thousands come to this Arabian fair and indulge in the wildest revels. It is not possible to watch the tents and the women in the midst of all this confusion ; and as a great quantity of Araki or

palm wine is drunk and plenty of hashish smoked, the whole company is in a state of frantic excitement and religious ecstasy. They ride on horseback into the water and roll about, let their wives bathe, etc. On that day the Europeans leave the place entirely to the Arabs, though some adventurers dare to mix with them in disguise to carry on an intrigue which has begun by secret glances long ago; a dangerous experiment, for woe betide him if his nationality is discovered, but *audaces fortuna juvat!*

No doubt, under French influence this will soon alter, and, as in Algiers and Egypt, the Europeans will enjoy greater liberties and increase more and more; then this beautiful watering-place will be appreciated as it deserves. The splendid fast steamers of the Rubattino Company take only two days from Genoa or Leghorn, and this trip along the Italian coast on the blue waters of the Mediterranean is alone worth while trying to dip one's limbs in African waters instead of the cold North Sea.

As a naval seaport Goletta is insignificant, its whole fortification consisting of one small fort on the shore, and even this is utterly useless, for in front of it stands one of the Bey's palaces, which would have to be demolished before any cannon could reach the enemy. The dominating points of the Gulf are the hill on which the once famous "Byrsa," the citadel of Carthage, stood, and another hill on which the mausoleum of St. Lewis is erected. It is to be hoped that the French will spare those two relics of ancient times and not destroy them

for military purposes. Even as a trade port, Goletta is of little significance, as the water is too shallow to allow steamers to approach nearer than one thousand yards. Last year only a French company obtained the concession of a safe harbour for ships of every size, an undertaking requiring a comparatively small outlay. The narrow passage between the gulf and the El Bahireh lake is also about to be widened, in order to enable smaller steamers at least to reach the quay of the harbour.

## *PART II.*

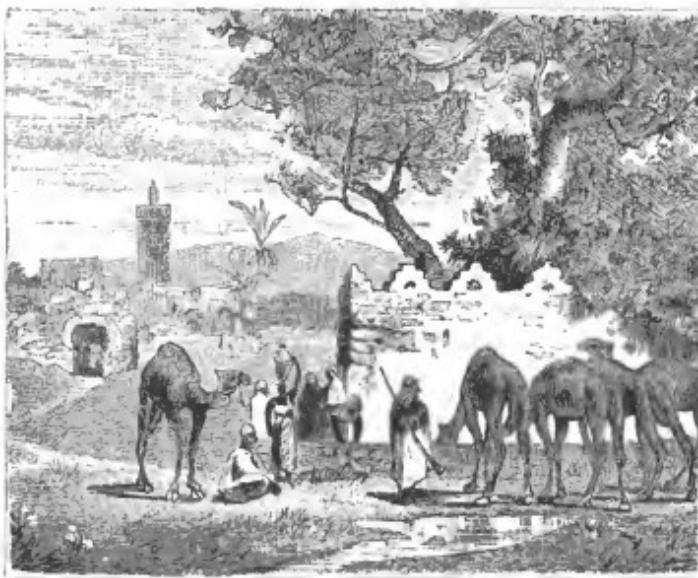
### CHAPTER I.

#### MATER, A TUNISIAN PROVINCIAL TOWN.

MATER is one of the wealthiest and most important towns of the Regency of Tunis. Only one day's journey from the capital and half that distance from Biserta, it is connected with both these places by well-kept roads, and lies in the midst of a rich soil and at the foot of the north Tunisian Highlands, the home of the Barbars. Mater is, together with Bedsha, the capital of Barbary; the population consists principally of Barbars, Vandals, and Arabians. This town is the true type of an Arabian provincial town in which the singular, ancient institutions of the Kroumirs show themselves most conspicuously. Nothing is more calculated to acquaint the traveller with the daily life of this people than a sojourn of several weeks in Mater or the above-mentioned Bedsha. The author has spent two weeks in the house of an Englishman, the only European here, and to this he owes the subjoined details.

When, after a long, tiring ride on a camel, the little town with its white walls comes first in sight, the beauty

of its situation and surroundings are very striking. Like all towns of Northern Tunis, it rises on a gentle slope. A single minaret towers above the walls; innumerable high cypresses, almond and fig trees, with the deep-blue sky in the background, form a lovely landscape, and the closer it is approached the more picturesque is the view,



OUTSIDE THE GATES OF MATER.

the more so as on the long journey from Tunis neither town nor tree is seen, with the sole exception of a few grayish-green olive groves. The neighbourhood is so bare and desolate that some parts are just like the desert. Only after such journeys the delight and enthusiasm of travellers is understood when describing an oasis. A Tunisian oasis, consisting of some miserable huts and a

few trees, including high palms, is not a very attractive picture, but its charm increases when surrounded by a tract of sandy desert!

In consequence of this the aspect of Mater is all the more surprising, encompassed as it is by orchards and kitchen gardens, so dear to the Barbars. On the top of the hill are the ruins of a fort; the stones have been taken from the remains of an ancient Roman town in the neighbourhood. An old stone bridge unites the two steep banks of the Oned Dshumin, flowing by Mater, in whose muddy water enormous herds of cattle protect themselves against the very painful sting of the gadflies.

If strangers are not invited to stay with the Chalif or with a wealthy inhabitant, it is hard for them to find any shelter, and they have to put up tents outside the town, for a small Arabian town possesses no hotels or inns. European travellers of distinction receive often an order from the Bey which directs the Caids and Chalifs to provide board and lodging for them. But they will always prefer to sleep in a tent outside the town to avoid the live stock so abundant in every Arabian bed.

For those Arabs who come from the neighbourhood with their camels and donkeys to the Friday market, there are one or two Fonduks (Arabian inns) to receive them. Imagine a square building without windows, ten to fifteen feet high, as a rule out of repair and surrounded by heaps of dirt. Through a shaky gate of thick planks with an antediluvian wooden lock, a dirty yard is reached, into which eight or ten small doors open. A windowless room, with a damp floor covered with one or two straw

mats in a corner of the yard is the dwelling of the landlord. A few pots, a trunk, and some coverlids form the furniture of this room. All the other rooms of the establishment are similar, whichever door is opened, the same dark holes without any furniture present themselves. On market days every one of these "rooms" is occupied by a whole Arab family. Husband, wife, children, camel, and donkey all make themselves comfortable together, and pay for this accommodation five charoubs (five farthings) per night. Horses and donkeys remaining in the yard are charged two charoubs each per day. Not only are all the rooms filled on these market days, but the yard is crammed with beasts of burden of all kinds. Now and then you find a fonduk with an upper story built over one corner, with a miserable staircase leading to it; this contains a single room without windows or furniture. It is reserved for distinguished visitors, as Caids, rich Arab sheiks, etc. To avoid as much as possible the inconvenience and danger of such places, the regular market-folks hire a room by the month, for which they pay ten piastres (five shillings).

In Mater, as in other provincial towns, these inns are generally situated outside the town or at the extreme end of the streets, so that on entering the fonduks are the first building we meet.

The streets, with their low houses without windows, are narrow, dirty, and angular, and here, as in Tunis, the town is built on the labyrinthian principle of a maze. You cannot otherwise explain the curious combination of crooked, irregular lanes which widen into open spaces lined with

equally miserable, dilapidated houses. In one of the principal streets the house of the Chalif or provincial governor is situated, and is only distinguished by a top-floor and a larger hall. On entering the large gate you enter the Chalif's reception-room or office direct from the street, and find him enthroned on a stone bench, dressed in the thorough Arabian costume of bornous and hood, and surrounded by some adjutants and flatterers. Here the intrigues are hatched which end in extortions. The room next to this is locked and heavily barred ; it is the provincial prison. The well-secured windows open into the street, and there are good reasons for that. He who is put in here gets nothing to eat or drink, nor is he *ever* allowed to leave the square hole on whose bare floor he also sleeps. His friends and relations bring him provisions, and hand them in through the window. The Chalif troubles himself no more about him than the chief of the police, and both would let him starve. Fortunately, the poor fellows need not remain long in this hole. The administration of justice in Tunisian provincial towns is very simple, and I will try to describe it in a few words.

Towns like Mater are always governed by the Caid, who pays a large sum for his post, and he in return robs and plunders the underlings in his district, *ad libitum*. He is the highest judge in all crimes and disputes which do not come within the reach of the Koran. Those which do, as marriages and separations or religious crimes, etc., come before the Kadi, of whom there is one in each town who has to be always present. The Caid, on the other hand, scarcely ever resides in the capital of his province, but

in Tunis itself, and is represented in the former by a Chalif. The judgment of this Chalif depends on the sum of money which is offered him by the disputants or the criminal. The Caid nominates everybody belonging to the provincial government ; from the beadle upwards, they are all his creatures, who help him to levy black mail on the population. He, in his turn, depends again on the Ministers. If the latter wants any money he deposes the old Caid to nominate a new one, who has of course to pay several thousand piastres for his place. The Caid does the same with his subalterns, for they receive no salary, but have to extract their pay from the population. Before the old Caid gives up his office, the Prime Minister has him arrested, and he is only set free after having paid a high ransom, sometimes as much as 30,000 or 40,000 piastres. The new Caid follows the same proceeding with the subalterns of the old one—for instance, the chief of the police. On a few bribed Bedouins proving that this latter had cheated them, he is locked up and has to pay a large sum of money before he is liberated. The policemen are simply armed citizens—called Mochasni—who are not paid either, and they differ from the other inhabitants only by wearing the ordinary Moorish dress instead of the white bornous generally worn. If they receive the order to arrest anybody, the prisoner, after having undergone his punishment, or if innocent, before his liberation, has to pay to them and their chief or shaush a considerable gratuity, or he is not allowed to leave the prison. Consequently it is the poorest as a rule who languish in the jails, amongst them often Bedouins from the country ; and

those objects of oppression are never admitted to official posts, as Kadi, Mufti or Caid.

There is a singular institution in Mater and other towns of Barbary, and which has a great influence on judicial decisions. During my walks in Mater, I often passed a building which had, like a mosque, a large yard, a well, and arcades, and was not only the finest edifice in the town, but was also better preserved than any other. Walls and arcades were of dazzling whiteness and covered here and there with coloured paintings, and the yard was scrupulously clean. My English companion, who had already spent six years in Mater, always warned me not to stand still before this building, or to stare at it. It was a "Zauya," one of the holy sanctuaries of the Mohammedans. As all criminals, including murderers, are invulnerable as long as they are within a Zauya, they all fly to it after having committed their misdeeds. In the meanwhile the relations of the criminal treat with the injured party, or, if it is a case of murder, with the relations of the murdered one, and arrange the amount of compensation. After this has been paid, the criminal may leave the Zauya without the law being able to touch him. In the neighbourhood of Dar-el-Bey, the seat of the Caid, are the offices of the notaries, of which every Tunisian town possesses a good number. These "offices" would be better designated by "booths," for they are very small recesses opening into the street; the low wooden bench which fills up the whole space is divan, writing-table, and record office all in one. The visitor takes off his shoes, ascends this bench, and sits down with his legs crossed by the side of the notary.

As Arabians never put the paper on the table when writing, but hold it in their hand, a table is not necessary. The notary's books consist of a small stamped journal, which has to be bought from the Government every year for sixteen shillings, and of which the first page contains the printed rules. Every case is noted on the page of the journal corresponding with the date, and these notes form the only evidence in a law-suit, be it ever so complicated. Letters and documents must be written on stamped paper, and there is a tax of one per cent to the State for every transaction. The income of a notary is a very small one, and they could scarcely earn their living if they were not now and then willing to alter the books for a consideration.

Next to the street of the notaries is the street of the barbers, who are such important personages throughout the East. Though it would be more practical to have them distributed all over the town, the Oriental spirit of caste is specially developed in them. The barbers' shops are all in a row, and between the meshes of the network which is used instead of a door, the barbers are seen busy shaving Mohammedan scalps.

The bazaars of Mater are rather uninteresting, if, as was the case with the author, the inspection of the bazaars of Damascus, Cairo, Constantinople, and Tunis have gone before. Every guild has its street or its place; the shops are small niches in the wall, where the goods inside just leave sufficient room for the vender to sit with crossed legs, in the midst of them. Most of the dealers are "Dcherbis," which means descendants from the Isle of

"Dcherba," in the small Syrte, a race clever and skilled in trade, which is in their hands in all Tunisian towns; the Maltese and the Jews only compete successfully with them, while the true Arab or Moor is rarely prosperous in trade. The streets of Mater are very lively both night and morning, and it is very interesting to watch the various national types which collect here. The citizens sit before the bazaars in groups, horses are impatiently waiting for their masters, tied to some big stones. Women dressed in the blue garment here so common, with thick silver bracelets on arms and ankles, pass with the noise of a dragoon's clinking spurs. Bedouins and Kabyles, with their long bornouses, generally ragged, the hoods drawn over their heads, and tied with a black cord called "Chrit," are by far the majority of the passers-by. Now and then a mad "Saint," a Sheik, trips through the streets and is treated with veneration by the populace. All his wishes are instantly fulfilled. He goes to a merchant, for instance, and asks him for five gold piastres; he gets them at once, but carries them off to make a present of them to somebody else. He begs of the one to give to the other. We also were fortunate enough to receive a new bornous from one of these saints. My companion advised me to keep the strange present for the moment, as the owner would turn up soon enough, and so he did.

The girls walk about unveiled up to eight years old. At that age they are already thoroughly developed, well built, and have pleasant features; but partly from climatic influences, partly through neglect, they are generally liable to disease of the eyes, many being partially or totally blind.

The principal business here is done in cattle and corn, and every Friday a market is held for the purpose ; they also supply the mountain tribes and the Bedouin duars of the neighbourhood with all sorts of goods. But, generally speaking, the misery is so great, and the taxes and extortions of the Government are so heavy, that the agent of the French Consul, an Arab, had no difficulty in gaining partisans for the French protectorate by kind words and a little money. Therefore the town of Mater would not have resisted the French very much, had it not been for the massacres and the cruelties towards the Kroumirs, which were greatly exaggerated by the Arabs ; their mode of military occupation also turned the sympathies of the populace against them.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE MEDSHERDA VALLEY AND ITS TOWNS.

THOUGH Tunis, the Africa of the Romans, is, together with Egypt, one of the oldest countries of the whole continent, and has no doubt given its name to the latter, it is in regard to aspect, products, and soil, anything but African. The north coast down to the capital shows the characteristics of Sicily, whereas the interior, as far as the salt lakes, recall the Roman Campagna. According to its nature, Tunis does not belong to Africa but to the countries of the Mediterranean, which, from Spain to Palestine, from Greece to Morocco, resemble each other very much. The vegetation is even much scantier in Tunis than in Sicily or Spain, or in any other country on the Mediterranean, not to mention the Riviera, whose abundant vegetation is only found again in the far-off East, on the banks of the Nile. Bordighera alone has probably more palm-trees in her gardens, and Palermo more orange-trees than the whole northern half of the Regency of Tunis. Not only that, but there is even no foliage in the valleys. The olive-tree is the only tree which thrives here and is seen most, and it is one of the principal sources of income to the Regency. But even

that is oftener seen in the Sahel, the middle part of Tunis, than it is in the poor north.

The main river which flows from west to east through northern Tunis, and at the same time the only river of the Regency which flows direct into the sea, is the Medshera, the Bagrada of the Romans. Its tributaries are insignificant like itself, its valley in many parts narrow and enclosed by high rocks. As the mouth is approached, the valley gets wider, till it changes into a large swamp filled with salt-water. This swamp contains the ruins of Utika.

Where there are no trees, there is no water. When the Arab hordes inundated the Regency in the beginning of the Hegira, there were large forests in the mountains, into which the native Christian populace fled. These forests were sacrificed to the fanaticism of Islamic bands, and were destroyed and burnt. The water disappeared with them, and with the water fertility, so that the torch with which the Mohammedans destroyed these magnificent forests destroyed themselves as well. The best proof of this are their descendants of to-day.

What is told about the great fertility of Tunis is all a myth. The country is withered, and scarcely supports its scanty, native population. The former granary of the Roman Empire can, in consequence of the want of water, scarcely be called fertile, and the former abundance is to be found only where sufficient moisture exists, that is to say, round Tunis and the whole north-east corner of the Regency, between the capital and the port of Biserta. The mountains north of the Medshera down to the sea-

coast are bare, stony, and decayed, the valleys are overgrown with thorny bushes; on the abysses only wild asparagus, holly-trees, and rosemary grow, and the latter, together with the olive-tree, is the only fuel of the Kabyles and Bedouins. The care the inhabitants take of every bit of wood, and the patience with which they collect the excrements of camels, is a proof of the want of forests and trees. On his wanderings the Bedouin is generally mounted on horseback or on a donkey, sometimes his little boy in front of him if no other animal for riding is to be had, but his wife and daughter, as well as the rest of the family, march barefoot behind their lord and master, occupying themselves zealously by picking up the dry rosemary-branches and the excrements by the road.

The Medsherda River is the "Tiber" of Tunis, just as its surrounding territory is its "Campagna." Not half as large as the Roman river, it has the same turbid colour, the same muddy water and steep banks. Nowhere deep enough for navigation, it has only few places which allow wading through it. It has but two bridges, one on the way from Tunis to Tebourba and the Kroumir district, the other not far from the ruins of Utika on the route to Biserta. During the last year, however, some bridges have been thrown over the river in the Medsherda valley, for the railway leading from Algiers to Tunis, to cut off the many windings of its middle course. Its valley, once covered by rich corn-fields, shows no traces of them now; the greater part is full of rushes and reeds, and stocked with numberless water-birds and tortoises; the higher districts bordering on it show again the char-

acter of steppes. Almost waterless in summer, it swamps the whole neighbourhood in spring, and makes all passage through this valley without streets and roads impossible ; in its lower course only, when emerging from the mountains of Medchez-el-Bab up to the hills where Utika once lay, does it bring plenteousness. But below Utika, near the village of Bu-Shatr, it is again lost in salty marshes, of which one does not know whether they are to be called land or sea.

Its tributaries are just as turbid and marshy and as useless ; they render progress in these steppes most difficult, and the transport of artillery would during military operations be a matter of impossibility. The river-system is left to itself ; no canal, no regulation of the bed, etc., helps the stagnant waters to flow off which collect in spring, and the consequence is that the scanty number of inhabitants in the few small towns suffer from fever and other illnesses.

But the likeness between the Medsherda valley and the Campagna goes even farther. It is the old Roman time which stamps Frikia with the same characteristics as the morassy and partly-deserted districts of the former States of the Church. At every stone-throw, here and there, the ruins of ancient Roman towns, of temples, baths, and aqueducts are met with. If in some places only shapeless heaps of stones show the old towns, there are, on the other hand, grand edifices of stone, covered with beautiful sculptures and inscriptions, towering above the miserable walls of the Arabic "douars," or villages, whose inhabitants have, owl-like, chosen to nestle here. Truly,

a sad spectacle! And what the Romans have built so many centuries ago will certainly outlast the frail buildings added by the Arabs. We have the Roman colony of Frikia distinctly before our eyes, and Islam with its mediæval civilisation, its mania of destruction, was unable to wipe away the grand traces of this early Christian Era.



A BEDOUIN FAMILY.

Roman Tunis seems to me covered with a large veil, through which the visage of Ceres is seen, who once ruled here. Islam has outlived itself in Tunis entirely.

The Regency is a piece of the Middle Ages; not an iota remains of the time when the power of the Moors was paramount. In Dugga, Te-Cesa, and other towns of the Medsherda district Rome's palaces and temples are still

standing ; the Islamitic structures of later times are decayed, a very picture of the people itself.

The only roads made by the Government, and still partly preserved, lead from the capital *vid* Testour and Tebursuk to the fortified town of Kef, situated near the Algerian frontier ; another leads from Tunis to the capital of the Berber and Kroumir district, Bedsha ; finally, the third and best conditioned takes you to a place endowed lavishly by nature, but neglected by men—the harbour of Biserta. The others are only footways on which the camel and donkey wend their way with difficulty. Carriages cannot be used on any other roads but those mentioned above, and only the port of Susa, situated south of Tunis in the little Syrte, can be reached rather easily by carriage.

By following the route mentioned first we pass through hilly land, fertile and well cultivated till we reach the Medsherda and the old picturesque town of Testour. Only seldom a wandering Bedouin family is met with ; the daily camel caravan between the capital and Kef is the only means of communication between the towns of Testour and Tebursuk lying on the route. Swamps have to be waded through, ravines have to be passed, and mountains scaled. Now and then we pass corn-fields and see the Bedouins break off the ripe ears—for we are in the month of May, the harvest month of Tunis.

The Bedouin does not cut the corn, but seizes a number of ears and severs them with an indented scythe from the stalk, which is left almost in its entire length. The Bedouin women sit by the road and beat with short,

wooden cudgels the ears which are spread between their legs. It is true they do not work for themselves ; scarcely enough remains to them to save them from starvation, all goes to the Caids, Generals, and Ministers. There is only one escape—emigration. This system of extortion has now gone on for centuries, and the once fiery, proud Arabs have turned into Fellahs ; poorer or more submissive Fellahs could not be produced by Egypt itself ; this is true, at least, of the districts which can be reached from the capital, and are subject to the Government. And not only the Government robs them, also the wild Berbers from the mountains, and this is the reason they hide and bury carefully anything they have, nevertheless, managed to save by hard work.

Hence the great poverty and thorough decay in the towns and villages we pass. There may be many a wealthy man amongst the merchants in the bazaars of Bedsha, Kef, and Tebursuk, but woe betide him if he shows his wealth by a home, be it ever so simple, or by renovating his house, or by the rebuilding of a broken-down wall. General and Caid are down upon him at once, oppress him, and lock him up till he has paid the required sum. This open-faced robbery, this oppression and uncertainty, are partly the cause that everybody is ruined, and everything at a standstill.

Tebursuk is an Arabic town of ruins built on the top of a Roman one. Wherever Islam reigns, the Arabs made themselves comfortable as to dwellings. The Roman structures were everywhere changed into Arabic ones, and the old city walls and forts dating from Byzantine times,

protect the Arabian intruders to-day. The town is in ruins, just like Testour, close by, and has about two or three thousand inhabitants. Kef, three or four days' journey from Tunis, is also a ruined town with four or five thousand poor inhabitants, amongst whom are about a thousand Jews. The town, situated where once the ill-famed Sicca Veneria was, extends along a mountain ridge, and an old citadel towers over it, also dating from Byzantine times, and just as decayed as the town itself and its walls. There seem to have been Byzantine forts on the surrounding heights as well, but the Arabs let them fall to ruins. Bedsha, the capital and the central market of the district of the Kroumirs, resembles in every respect the towns just described, though there is more traffic and vital power to be found there.

## CHAPTER III.

## HABITS AND LIFE OF THE BERBERS.

THOUGH near to Europe and easily accessible, Tunis is very little known, especially its northern parts, and until now a correct map of it is not to be found. The part north of the Medsherda River is certainly ethnographically unexplored. The inhabitants of this district from the Algerian frontier to the capital of Tunis consists, as in Algiers, of different races, as Berbers, Arabs, Moors, Vandals, and Turks; but here a greater amalgamation between the heterogeneous elements took place, so that the races have not remained pure. The first inhabitants of the country intermixed with the Vandals retired into the mountains when the conquering Arabian hordes invaded the country, but they adopted the Mohammedan religion, and many of their habits and customs; in the course of centuries they also received many European and Arabic expressions into their language, and latterly this has taken place to such a degree that they now make little use of their original language, and in their intercourse with the Arabs of the plain and of the towns they speak Tunisian Arabic, or "Machrebi." If the Arabs do not understand them always, the reason must be looked for in a thieves'

jargon they make use of, as do also the thieving Bedouin hordes on the Southern and Western frontier of Tunis and in Algiers, just as the criminals of our capitals have a slang of their own. And they gave up their peculiarities in many other respects ; they exchanged them with the Arabs, so that the difference between the two principal groups is in our day scarcely noticeable. The number of inhabitants in Northern and Middle Tunis reaches scarcely half a million, and north of the Medsherdha river and its district the number amounts only to 200,000 ; most of them of Berber origin, and only round Biserta, in the north-east corner of the Regency, are Bedouins and people from Tripoli to be found.

As already mentioned, the differences of race that mark the Kabyles, Kroumirs, and Bedouins respectively are not nearly as conspicuous as in Algiers, where the Kabyles live in greater numbers, and do not come much in contact with the nomadic tribes of the plain. Still they are sufficient to be noticed. While, for instance, all the Bedouins have black hair, eyes, and beard, the Berbers have often red or fair hair, blue eyes, light bristly beards, and also a lighter complexion. Their dress does not differ much. Both wear long linen shirts down to their knees, and if they can afford it, the thick bornous over it. This latter is, if they are poor, manufactured by their wives, of dark camel hair, while the rich wear it white, and exchange it in summer for a light cloak with silk tassels. These bornouses are considered important heirlooms, and on account of their durability they are often worn by three generations. Formerly the Berbers had no head-

gear at all, but they have now adopted the red fez of the Bedouins, in Tunis called sheshia, round which the thin white turban cloth is wound. In summer, when the heat is very great, they wear an enormous straw hat with a broad brim, which they put on the top of the turban and of the hood of the bornous as well. In the mountains one often meets poor Berbers dressed only in a dirty shirt; a short black coat with armholes and hood serves them as a cloak; they never put it on, but throw it over the back and pull the hood over the head. The thick and thorny brambles, the aloes, the wild asparagus, and cactuses growing in the mountains of the Atlas, make it necessary for them to wear leather gaiters up to their knees. They wear either straw slippers, or oftener sandals with thick felt soles like the Chinese. On horseback they take off this covering for the feet, and wealthy sheiks then don high top-boots of yellow leather without heels.

The women amongst the tribes of Barbary enjoy many more liberties than their sisters of Arabia. While the latter may never show themselves with unveiled faces, and even cover these during work in house and field, with their hands as soon as a stranger approaches, the women of Barbary may not only go about unveiled, but may speak to men in the course of business, etc. Their dress is the same as is worn by the Bedouin women: they wind a simple piece of blue material in a very clever way round their body, and tie it by a cord round their hips. It does not concern them much that this piece of stuff does not cover them sufficiently. They cannot be called pretty. When very young they are well built, but as soon as they

marry—from the age of fourteen or fifteen—they have such hard work in their miserable houses that they soon grow old like the Bedouin women, and to this must be added the complete absence of all medical aid in confinements in these rough mountain regions. While the Arabs, partly by tradition, partly through the intercourse with Europeans, possess many remedies and medicines for their illnesses, the Kabyles are utterly ignorant, and have more recourse to old women's witchcraft than real remedies.

Generally speaking, the position of women from Barbary is a much higher and more favourable one than that of the Arabian women. They have the reputation, also, of being better looking and better made, and especially of being cleaner, perhaps because there is more water to be found in their mountains than in the dry plains of the Bedouins, where it never rains. The Koran grants the Bedouins permission to perform their prescribed ablutions before prayer with sand if they have no water—a proof of the prevailing dearth of it. A husband has to buy his wife in Barbary—that is to say, he has to pay his future father-in-law a certain sum, or the value in cattle and horses, so that, contrary to our ideas in Europe, a family blessed with a great many daughters is to be considered fortunate. But while in this way daughters bring capital to their fathers, nothing is left them on his death, when everything goes to the sons exclusively. This is to prevent an heiress marrying into another Kabyle tribe, and so increase the resources of the stranger.

If a husband leaves his wife and disappears, and nothing is heard of him during one or two years, the wife is free,

and returns to her father's house. This is also the case when they are divorced by the Kadi, but then the husband has to appoint a certain sum for her keep as long as she lives. Every separated or deserted wife is absolutely free, and nobody blames her for eventual intrigues. It has been said of some Algerian tribes that they offer their wives to visitors and strangers, but this is only due to the circumstances detailed above.

It will thus be seen that the wife of the Kabyle is not his slave, like a Bedouin's wife, but his friend and companion. While the latter may never take her meals at the same time as her husband, but must attend upon him, a Kabyle family eat out of the same dish. Husband and wife supplement each other, a state of things which is no doubt a remnant of the time when the Berbers were Christians. The woman is even active on the battlefield : she dresses wounds, provides munition, and handles a gun even, if necessary, turning thus often into a fury, as the war between the French and the Kabyles testifies.

Tattooing is very much in use amongst the Berbers. The men tattoo their arms and calves only—sometimes with the funniest devices. The women tattoo, in addition, face, neck, and chest ; and their hands and feet are ornamented in a way which recalls the black open-worked mittens of our ladies ; the pattern is just as carefully punctured. There is generally a small square on each cheek, and between the eyebrows a little cross, the origin of which I shall mention in another chapter, and which is also found amongst the Bedouin women. As the Berbers never were good Mohammedans, they did not object to

the form of the cross. But the religious sheiks and Marabouts do not approve of it, and if one of these marry, they compel the woman to get rid of it by lime and black soap. Mothers tattoo their children when quite young by pricking the pattern with needles, and by rubbing soot on it while it still bleeds.

The Berber tribes of Tunis, the Kroumirs amongst them, are not, like the Algerians, tied to fixed abodes. It is true that some live in houses built by themselves of unbaked bricks, or amongst the numerous Roman ruins which cover the still unexplored chains of mountains north of the Medsherdha river, or they like to erect their miserable huts against such ruins, which at the same time supply the building materials. But many tribes lead a nomadic life, just like the Bedouins ; they live in black tents platted of camel hair, and carry on agriculture and cattle-breeding like them. But whether tent or hut, their dwelling is always divided in two parts, the left one for wife and children, the right one for the husband. Rarely do they possess a harem ; they are generally satisfied with one wife.

Their household is a very simple one, and as a rule it consists of a few home-made covers, mats, and sacks, some pots for cooking, and a small handmill of stone for grinding. More important are the arms and saddle and harness of the men. He values these highly, keeps them, unlike the Bedouin, scrupulously clean, and never touches them without putting a piece of leather over them first. A Bedouin allows his sword and gun to rust and says, "A black dog bites as well as a white one." The Kabyle makes his own

ammunition, and also fabricates his own knives and swords if no opportunity offers to steal them, which he prefers.

The equipment of a Berber or Kroumir consists generally of an old percussion gun and two old pistols, with which, however, he never misses ; then a yataghan or a broad Bedouin sword with a flat leather sheath ; lances he never carries. The horses of the Tunisian Berbers are small and lean, but excellent climbers. They are never shod behind but only on their fore-feet. Their shoes are very thin, without sponges, and the ends join so as to form a complete circle. Not to deprive the horse-shoe of its elasticity, no nails are put into the iron behind. The saddles are made of wood, covered with red or yellow leather, and behind and in front high boards for leaning on, so that the rider has not much room between. The stirrup, mostly strapped short, is of iron, and has the form of a sandal with a square sole ; the edges are very sharp, and serve as spurs. The high top-boots of the rich Berbers have only one spur, probably on that Jew's principle who, when asked the reason of a similar arrangement, said, "When one half of a horse is spurred, the other half must run too." Instead of the small wheel a sharp long spike serves to touch the horse.

Many more details might be given of the dress, equipment, and the mode of living of the Berbers, but the above details will perhaps suffice to give an approximate idea of this aboriginal people. There remains only to describe the highly interesting and singular community of the single tribes. They form here, as in Algiers, a complete republic, with an organisation recalling Switzerland and the United

States. This they possessed from time immemorial, and neither the dominion of the Turks, of the French, or of the Bey of Tunis could quite revoke it. Wars and the lawless state of affairs during the last-named Regency have nevertheless shaken it, and their amalgamation with the Arabs could only contribute to the destruction of their fine republican institutions. The many tribes inhabiting the mountain chains between the Algerian frontier and the lakes of Biserta, whose number I should estimate at over twenty, form together a kind of confederation, of which the different tribes might be the single cantons. The Berbers designate the division of their nation into tribes and villages very ingeniously, as with body, members, and fingers (Ardsh, Feched, and Deshra). In the "fingers," respective villages, there are municipalities which are elected by all the Berbers of the place. They assemble every Friday on their market-place, and elect twice a year an Amihn or Mayor, then an administrator, several policemen and counsellors. This corporation forms together the Dshemma (literally "Mosque"). All Amihns of one tribe choose amongst themselves an "Amihn el Umena"—that is to say, a mayor above the mayors—and these, together with the religious sheiks and Marabouts, form a kind of senate, which decides the question of war and peace between the single tribes, and in all important home affairs, etc. Although it would scarcely be supposed, they have their party intrigues, their ambitious candidates, orators, and hereditary rights, etc., like any other republic. Though there is no hierarchy amongst the Mohammedans, and still less amongst the Berbers, the Marabouts might be considered

as such, for their authority and influence is very great. A Kroumir may not pray all the year round, he may not fast during the Rhamadan, but he will repair the house or kubba (mausoleum) of a Marabout if he sees it is damaged ; he will take him food and drink, and pay him taxes which amount to a hundredth part of their cattle and a tithe of their harvest.

While the Marabouts exercise influence over the whole tribe, without exactly possessing an acknowledged power, the Dshemmas are the authorities of every village ; the Amihn or Mayor is the highest executive power and judge at the same time, while the "Counselors" make the laws. The "Shaush" execute the sentences. The Berbers are the only Mohammedans who have their own code of laws instead of the Koran, this former dating probably from before the Christian Era.

According to this code, capital punishment and the bastinado, so customary in Tunis, are prohibited to the Kroumirs. A murderer is punished by the Amihn by having his house destroyed, his property confiscated, and by being banished for ever ; but here, as in Sicily and Corsica, the "Vendetta" does not allow a murderer to live long. Other crimes and misdemeanours, as thefts from the people of his race, etc. (stealing from strangers is not considered a theft), are punished by heavy fines, of which one third goes to the Amihn and the Dshemma, another is saved by the Amihn for times of war to buy arms, ammunition, and powder, and the other serves to help the old, the sick, and the poor.

It will be seen from this that the Berber is absolutely

free ; though paying taxes for his mosque and the community, he does not pay for the Bey and his Ministers. The Tunisian Government has never succeeded in mastering the Kroumirs, or in compelling them to pay taxes. They form an independent republic, excellently organised, and depend on nobody but themselves. At public discussions everybody is heard and listened to as if he were a sheik or Amihn. No despotic monarch oppresses them, nobody receives their taxes without their knowing what they are used for. Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at if they try to preserve their independence in opposition to the Bey and the French. They know, moreover, very well that robbery and theft go unpunished according to their laws only, and they do not wish to exchange this convenience for the doubtful submission to French rule and French law. However, their liberty will not last much longer, and they will not escape the French this time.

## CHAPTER IV.

## TO THE RUINS OF UTICA.

THE archaeologist finds nowhere a richer and more productive field for his researches than in the north-eastern part of the Regency of Tunis. All the wide territories from Biserta down to the capital are replete with ruins of ancient Roman towns, bridges, and other structures; in some places these are found on the surface, in others they are half buried or hidden under the earth, and only some remaining pillars or fragments betray the place where once a large town may have stood. The Mohammedan populace have in their ignorance and roughness destroyed and removed a good deal of this, and if still so rich a field is left for the archaeologist, it only shows the height of culture which Carthage possessed. During the many centuries which have passed since the last destruction of Carthage not a single stone has been taken from Tunisian mountains, not a quarry opened to supply building material for the towns of the Regency. All these towns, with their palaces, mosques, towers, and walls, are built from the splendid stones of these Roman ruins.

It is therefore surprising that there are still so many ruins existing. It is true they are not situated near the

Arab places, or conveniently for destruction, or to be used for modern building purposes. Carthage and Utica, however, were too near to the Tunis of to-day to escape, so that there is not one stone left upon another. Wherever the Arabs came they tried to destroy the traces of their great predecessors. Hatred and contempt for everything foreign, indifference towards the architectural treasures of past ages, and finally selfishness and indolence, were the cause of their levelling with the ground, and using for their tasteless buildings those famous ruins which the European preserves and protects with so much care. It would be interesting to know whether any of these Arab fanatics ever thought of the founders when destroying those precious ruins ; whether the thought of their predecessors who once possessed this land ever entered their head. Scarcely. While Egypt, Palestine, Algiers, and even Persia have their archaeological museums, and employ European professional men to undertake excavations, and while they protect their historic edifices in every way they can, there is nothing of the kind to be seen here, where the incredible ignorance and lethargy of Government and people allow everything to go to rack and ruin.

From Mater I made an excursion to the so-called ruins of Utica, which are half a day's journey to the east. This part of the country is, with the exception of a few plots, utterly uncultivated, notwithstanding its natural fertility. Thorns, wild asparagus, heather, and prickly esparto grass cover the wide roadless steppes which here and there are crossed by steep rocky mountain-chains. The horses pick out their way carefully between the

thorny weeds, and cannot be induced to accelerate their pace. For miles there is neither house nor tree, only here and there those Roman ruins, and the burning sun above our heads. Under these circumstances travelling can scarcely be called pleasant. A guide and an escort are indispensable, and money and provisions must also be carried about, and neither the most pleasant travelling-companions nor the most interesting adventures and discoveries, can reconcile us to the hardships of this journey, especially as the danger of being attacked by highwaymen has to be added. The mountains between Tunis and Biserta which we have to pass are a notorious hiding-place for the Bedouin robbers, who have a preference for this part, because near it is the road much frequented by caravans leading from the harbour towns of the north to the capital of Tunis. There has, however, been an improvement of late; the traffic on the road has very much increased, and the Government sends now and then mounted zaptiehs to reconnoitre. Not that the Bedouins would be much afraid of them, for the Tunisian zaptiehs as watchmen resemble those dogs which bark, but do not bite.

Frequently on our way we came across little mounds consisting of small stones, evidently carried hither by human hands. Our guide explained them to be the graves of those murdered by the robbers. According to an old Mohammedan custom, every passer-by throws a stone on such a grave, and this is the origin of these sad monuments of evil deeds. During our ride of several hours through the mountain valleys we held loaded revolvers in our

hands, a precaution recommended by the dragoman, who had had some unpleasant experience at the same place before. We passed many Roman ruins, well preserved ; high pillars and arches of the grand aqueduct of Utica which formed a worthy companion to the other famous one of Carthage.

At last we left the mountains behind us, and we reached a plain extending over many miles, which at the time of our visit, in the month of April, gloried in the most splendid green, mixed with the many other colours of numberless herbs in blossom. To the north the mountain-chain, called Dshebel-Kechbata, extends in a wide arch down to the sea ; southward about ten miles farther, a low ridge of hills, on which the aqueduct lies, runs parallel with it. In the midst of this plain, surrounded by these two elevations, flows the Oued Medsherda, the Bagrada of the ancients, and empties itself at a distance of about fifteen miles into the lake of Porto Farina, which is connected with the sea. The colouring of the plain in front of us was beautiful beyond description, the innumerable meadow-flowers which luxuriate in tropical abundance between the juicy green quite overpower the grass and cover it with rosy, orange-coloured, or white patches. The whole looked like a gigantic Oriental carpet, and it is very likely that the Persians and Syrians have taken the ideas for the composition of their famous carpets from the magnificent patterns offered them here. And as they weave into the midst of their many-coloured textures passages from the Koran in white colour, so does the winding Bagrada, with its numerous branches, intersect this natural carpet like the

writing of Titans. The high and bare mountains, covered in some places with ruins, in others with the small snow-white Kubbas of the Marabouts, the plain with its river, and finally, far off by the ridge of hills, the ruins of Utica, presented a picture which reminded me of two similar towns of ancient culture : the valley of the Rio Pecos with the Taos Pueblo and the Aztec ruins of New Mexico ; and still more of the famous valley of Thebes and Karnak in Upper Egypt. At the time when the three towns just mentioned were large and populated the resemblance was not as striking as to-day, for the valley near which Utica lies to-day was then covered by the sea, which penetrated as far as the mountains, and made Utica a seaport. A large harbour with enormous fortifications received the galleys, sailing and rowing boats, which came to Utica from all parts of the Mediterranean ; grand palaces of marble and alabaster lined the streets, and the palace of the governor rose on an island in the midst of the harbour ; on the mountain behind the town the great amphitheatre was situated in which the baiting of wild beasts took place ; temples, theatres, fountains, and statues beautified the densely-populated town, which towards the land was closed in by strong walls.

What a mighty change since then ! The sea has retired to a great distance, and its shores are now ten miles away from Utica ; the harbour which once held the proud Roman ships can be traversed with dry feet. The archaeologist alone succeeds in discovering a likeness between the Utica of old and its scanty remnants of to-day, for even the lines of the ancient sea-shore are effaced. The swampy

tide of the Medsherdha river has caused this change. The masses of earth and mire which it brought from the interior of the country settled in the Bay of Utica, and turned first the harbour, then the bay itself, into a marsh, and in the course of thousands of years changed it into good arable land, through which the Medsherdha river flows now.

Single Arab farm huts shaded by a few orange and almond trees, now and then a herd of cows and some Bedouin tents, are all you see in this valley. No trace of Utica itself remains. On asking our dragoman for it he only smiled and shook his head. Our road now leads through rich fields up a gentle hill, on which the lonely farm of an Arab lies. Some outbuildings, and on the other side of the hill thirty or forty miserable huts, half-buried in the ground inhabited by Berbers, are all we see. The dragoman stops the camels before the gate of the farm and begins to unpack. We are in Utica. To visit the old town we must first make friends with the inhabitants of the new town, for although there are plenty of European travellers, there is no inn of any kind, and visitors are compelled to sleep in the open air, or under a tent if they have brought one. Provisions, if a few eggs and the unpalatable bread of the Bedouins be excepted, are not to be found for miles round, and care must be taken to be provided with what is necessary. If there were a Utica in Germany or England the whole place would be carefully hedged in, good hotels and guides would be found, the rubbish cleared away—in short, a Utica would exist. But here neither these good Bedouins

nor even their sheik, the rich and respected Benajet, have an idea that Utica ever existed. They only know that the place they live in is called Bu-shater ; the name of Utica is unknown to them. The scanty ruins are unnoticed, and the precincts of the ancient town are covered, wherever possible, with waving fields, and where sufficient brickwork could be found, an Arab mausoleum has been built. Just as the cross of the saintly Louis is enthroned on the ruins of Carthage, so the half-moon is planted on these heathen temples. My English companion, Mr. Smith, had lived in this place three years ; the rich Benajet had leased to him all the land for miles round, and Smith made a fortune by the rational cultivation of the very fertile soil.

At the time of my visit, Benajet's harem was quartered in the farm mentioned above, so that our hopes to be hospitably received there were thwarted. Eunuchs guarded the farm, which is surrounded by walls as if it were a fortress. Fortunately, I had brought my tents, which we pitched amongst heaps of ruins, and as far as possible from the dwellings of the Berbers.

I was too tired after my seven hours' ride from Mater to visit the ruins, or rather the traces of the ruins, on the first day. The wives of Benajet had heard meanwhile of our arrival, and as Smith was in the habit of visiting there, they sent word by a eunuch that a dinner was being prepared for us, which was, in fact, sent and put before us on the floor ! Though there were no knives or forks, and only a big wooden spoon stuck in the sickly sweet dish, we ate heartily, the more so as we had only

tasted chocolate, sheep's milk, and cheese, and dates for weeks.

We were still worse off for sleeping ; they had sent us covers and pillows ; however, these could not silence the howling and screaming of the owls, bats, crickets, and hyenas, which are quartered in the extensive ruins of Utica ; these dismal noises did not cease until the dawn of morning, the time when we had to rise in order to begin our wanderings amongst the ruins. These are of the greatest interest for the archaeologist, but they possess none for the common mortal. Of Utica there is nothing left but the reservoirs of the aqueduct, completely filled with earth ; they have been disinterred by the Mr. Smith mentioned above, and are used as—cattle-sheds ! On the same hill, a little farther on, the oval of the amphitheatre can be plainly seen, with distinct traces of the graduated seats, which are partly well preserved. Some years ago subterranean brick-lined granaries were discovered, which contained considerable quantities of wheat. To this day the Bedouins keep their corn in similar "Silos," called by them "Motmur." A small valley divides this hill from another which is a little higher, and is, according to existing traces, no doubt the spot where the castle of the town once stood. To-day two small Arab Kubbas (mausoleums) stand in its place. Here a beautiful view presents itself over the precincts of the town, the harbour, the canals, and moats, of all of which the outlines can be followed. Even the lines of the streets and the ground-plan of the buildings are visible, nothing is wanting but the ruins themselves.

The level seems to have remained the same during these thousands of years ; the ruins have not disappeared as in Egypt and Asia Minor, through being choked up with earth, but on the contrary through being carried away. The houses, temples, and palaces fell to pieces, and when the Arabs came they loaded their camels with the splendid building stones, and took them to the coast to build the Tunis of to-day, Porta Farina, Mater, and other Arab towns. One solitary arch is left in the midst of three or four pillars in a critical condition ; they are in the truest sense of the word the only stones of Utica left resting one upon another. Not far off, a few palms shade a warm spring which issues from the ground, and in the water of which innumerable tortoises swarm ; these are considered holy by the Arabs and are fed by them ; the latter also attribute a great healing power to the water itself. Farther on, the country is desolate—a green swamp, which extends to the inland sea of Porta Farina, whose white walls are seen from a distance. Utica has paid dearly for the betrayal of her sister-town Carthage. The “*Nunquam perierunt ruinæ*” of Carthage has, as Maltzan says, been realised in the case of Utica.

## CHAPTER V.

## BISERTA AND ITS LAKE DISTRICT.

IT is well known that the French have always felt the want of a good harbour in Algiers; the coasts are steep and rocky, and offer scarcely any places for anchorage. Tunis, on the other hand, might be rich in good harbours. Biserta, Porta Farina, and Goletta could easily be made into such. No doubt it will be one of the first tasks of the French to make these useless harbours accessible to their merchant ships and men-of-war, and so obtain the principal object of their Tunisian Expedition.

Biserta especially could with very little trouble be made into one of the largest and safest harbours of the Mediterranean. While town and harbour under the name of Hippozarytus were of great importance in olden times, and were raised under Cæsar even to a "Colonia," their decline commenced with the Hegira and the Moorish conquest, and now scarcely a few dozens of fishing-boats enter this harbour during the year. But the French will turn it into an important commercial port soon enough, and make it, if other powers do not object, a Toulon of the African north coast.

Biserta is consequently of great future significance,

though while possessed by the Tunisians it was more than harmless. I visited it and the surrounding sea district last year, starting from Mater, from which it is six hours' distant. All the country in this north-east corner of Tunis is exceedingly fertile and has plenty of water, so that the harvest is plentiful even in years of scarcity. The gently rising mountain-chains and the groups of hills of this district are covered with olive and tobacco plantations, and the tobacco planted here by ignorant Arabs is, according to competent judges, only surpassed by the Cuba plant. They have also got here the only plantations of almonds, figs, oranges, and lemons, and at the time of the war of slaves they cultivated cotton with great success.

Biserta lies in the midst of the deep bay of the same name, at the mouth of a canal which connects the sea with a large inland lake encircled by mountains. This latter possesses, according to my own soundings, a depth of some six or seven fathoms, and has neither sandbanks, cliffs, or shoals, and there is no doubt a harbour could be built here large enough to receive all the Mediterranean fleet. This lake is about eight English miles long. The canal which unites the lake, called Tindsha Bensert by the Arabs (the Hipponitis Lacus of the ancients), with the sea, gets narrower when it approaches the latter, but offers a safe and secure entrance even for the largest men-of-war. To-day, because of the efflux of the sweet-water lake, which also discharges here, it is filled with sand, and only one fathom deep, but it could easily and with little cost be deepened to three or four fathoms. The canal through-

out its whole length between Biserta and the inland lake—about twelve English miles—has an average depth of from five to seven fathoms, without any shallow places. Immediately above the town, this canal, which up to here is only about two English miles in width, changes into a lake five miles broad, which with a depth of four fathoms would be sufficient for all ships entering Biserta.

It will be seen, therefore, that the natural conditions for the foundation of a large harbour are not wanting. If Biserta is deserted and poor it has to thank Islamic rule for it. The lethargy of the inhabitants, the insecurity of the neighbourhood, the weakness of the Government, and the queer state of affairs prevailing here for centuries, have made of Biserta that heap of ruins which it is to-day.

The town is situated on both sides of the canal, and also on an isle in the midst of the latter connected with the mainland by bridges, and is surrounded with high crenellated walls. Near the town on the highest mountain, which rises direct from the sea, stands an old decayed tower, which formerly belonged to the fortifications. The town contains two old prison-fortresses in ruins, the Kasba and the Kossaiba (little Kasba); the former was once a small town itself, but only its ruins remain now. The narrow streets of Biserta are dirty and lined by miserable houses; the bazaar streets are covered, and many passages regularly arched in, so that the inner town contrasts strangely in its darkness with the other parts washed by the canal, and beaming in the bright sunshine. Four gates lead into the town. According to the old

Moorish style, each house surrounds a square yard, into which the rooms open.

There are about 5000 inhabitants, most of them Moors, who, driven away from Andalusia, came to settle here, and are the wealthiest amongst the inhabitants. They have their own quarter, which to this day is called "Humt el Andalus." Amongst the 5000 inhabitants there are 500 Jews and scarcely 100 Europeans, most of them Italians and Maltese, who live by fishing, or by exporting the tropical fruit and tobacco cultivated here. There is scarcely any navigation. Twelve or fourteen boats belonging to Italian seamen go out coral-fishing, otherwise the harbour is only visited by Tunisian, Algerian, and Sicilian small crafts. Communication with the capital is established daily by a caravan of two or three camels, which principally takes fresh sea-fish to Tunis, and forwards letters. Scarcely anything else but the common necessities of life are carried by these caravans.

The second lake, mentioned above, is called Tindsha Dshkul, Sweet-water Lake, and is partly a swamp. In its midst rises the rocky island Dshebel Dshkul, 2000 feet high. The lake is very rich in fish, and from it is derived an income of several hundred thousand francs per annum.



BEDOUINS TRAVELLING.

## CHAPTER VI.

## FROM TUNIS TO KERWAN.

KERWAN, to the west of Susa, is situated on the large inland lake, Sebcha Sidi el Hani, and is not only the holiest town of Tunis, but of all Mohammedan Africa, one of the "four gates of paradise" as the Arabs say. Built about some twenty years after the commencement of the Hegira, it is at the same time one of the oldest towns of the whole East, the seat of a famous high school of the Koran, and a place much frequented by pilgrims, for it contains in its principal mosque one of the holiest relics, namely, the beard of the Prophet, by which the Arabs are so fond of swearing.

Most travellers who wish to reach Kerwan take the route along the sea-coast to Susa, and from there across the country westward, because most antiquities are to be found there. But taking the straight way southwards from Tunis to Kerwan, two famous places are passed, Zaghuian and Dshugar, built at the sources of the old Carthaginian aqueduct. And a good deal is seen of the country besides.

The first half of the way between Tunis and Zaghuian is passable by carriages ; it is true now and then a bridge

is wanted, and we often were on the point of taking an involuntary bath ; the way also leads over rocks, and we were constantly afraid of having the axle of our carriage broken, but still travelling by carriage was preferable on so long a journey to riding on horseback or on a camel, for it was the beginning of May and the sun was scorching.

Our road lay first through rich corn-fields, where the ears already showed the golden colour of ripeness ; every stalk carried an ear of twenty, thirty, and even fifty grains, a proof of the inexhaustible fertility of the soil. The olives in the extensive plantations stood in full bloom. We then passed gentle slopes, from the top of which we had a magnificent view of Tunis, till we reached the dried-up marsh of Sebcha el Sedshum, with innumerable tortoises crawling about in the mud. In the olive-trees we often saw the funny little chameleons which are so numerous in Tunis. At an hour and a half's distance from town we came to the colossal ruins of the castle once owned by Achmet Bey, who had it built some thirty years ago at the cost of about ten millions of francs. To-day it is one of the largest and saddest ruins I ever saw. What a strange custom that in this country the Regent is not allowed to live in the house of his predecessor ! Besides the proper palace, now a heap of marble and alabaster blocks, Mo-hammedia shows other still greater ruins of barracks and palaces. The splendid gardens once surrounding this princely residence have run wild. Aloes and agaves with their palm-like stalks, bushes of cactuses, palms, orange, and fig trees, all covered with thick weeds and vines,

show the fertility of the soil ; nevertheless, there is in the whole neighbourhood neither field nor plantation. Thirty years ago, the liveliest place, the grandest and richest palace of the Regency, a miserable family of nomads live to-day in its ruins. And the whole country as far as Zaguan presents the same desolate aspect ; half steppe, half desert, it is entirely uninhabited. The colossal ruins of the old Carthaginian aqueduct accompany us nearly all the way to Zaguan, sometimes resting on the stone pillars 120 feet high, sometimes cutting deep into the mountains. Near the little river Oned Meliana are the highest of these pillars. Erected from enormous stones, they rise to immense heights, and are connected by arches of 20 feet span. Some are of cement only faced with stone, probably those which the Byzantines built in place of others destroyed by the wars. These monuments of ancient Roman architecture are in many places intact. Side by side with these runs the new aqueduct, built under the government of the present Bey, a work which cost the country 13,000,000 francs, but is not worth the money. A modern bridge constructed with the stones of the Roman aqueduct crosses the Meliana river. We had now passed the wide valley, and went up those rocky hills again which separate it from the valley of Zaguan. On these hills the scanty ruins of the ancient Roman town of Udina are to be found. Here we saw for the first time the Dshebel Zaguan in all its glory ; a gray mass of rock about 4000 feet high without any vegetation, its massive top surrounded by clouds. It forms the southern border of one of the most charming valleys of the Regency, comparable

to an oasis. Here we find for the first time the palm-tree, so rare in Northern Tunis, in large quantities ; we see the most beautiful orange and fig trees ; the carob-tree, cactuses, laurels, and myrtle grow here to an enormous height, forming a dense forest from which emerge the snow-white houses of Dshebel Zaguan.

An Amr-Bey, which we presented, opened to us the gates of the Dar-el-Bey, which looked quite stately from a distance, but turned out to be a miserable, decayed building without furniture, where we had to lie on wooden benches, without finding sleep, for Tunis counts more hopping inhabitants than walking ones, and they are a perfect plague to the Europeans. Fortunately it was not warm enough for the scorpions, for Zaguan has the reputation of breeding these disgusting animals in enormous quantities, which increase as you go farther south.

At the old Roman archway which stands at the entrance of the village, the Chalifa and the notabilities received us. I handed my Amr-Bey, but the good man being unable to read, he had to pass it on to his clerk to find out what it contained. He was much pleased when we declared ourselves willing to pay for his hospitality, and he gave orders at once to have a lamb killed, which was put before us a few hours later on large dishes in the most varied shapes and forms, of course without knives and forks. The national dish of the Tunisians, the kus-kussu, formed the *pièce de résistance* of this Lucullian meal. Its preparation, not very appetising, will be described below. We were obliged to eat whether we liked it or not, for our good hostess of the hotel in Tunis had for-

gotten to put provisions and wine into our carriage. We had already made this unpleasant discovery half-way, in the midst of the desert. When we were ready for lunch, we unpacked our baskets with great expectations, and found on the top a heap of little loaves, which we distributed at once amongst the servants and coachmen, reserving for ourselves the better things which were to come. To our great astonishment, however, we found napkins, knives and forks, plates, pepper and salt, but nothing else. The chickens, eggs, pigeons, and legs of mutton had remained in Tunis. We had the greatest difficulty to induce the servants to return some of the bread. It can therefore be easily imagined how ravenously we attacked the oily dishes of the Bedouins in the palace of Zaguan. But scarcely had we finished our repast when a servant from the hotel arrived with the forgotten dainties, laden on a couple of donkeys. Though too late for that day, they did good service afterwards.

Zaguan is a miserable little place : it is built on the ruins of a Roman settlement, whose aqueduct is still used by the inhabitants. It seems that this water is well adapted for dyeing purposes, as the knitted sheshia (fez) of Tunis are sent hither to be dyed red. This is the only industry of the place, which, however, does not seem very lucrative, for I never saw a poorer or more wretched place.

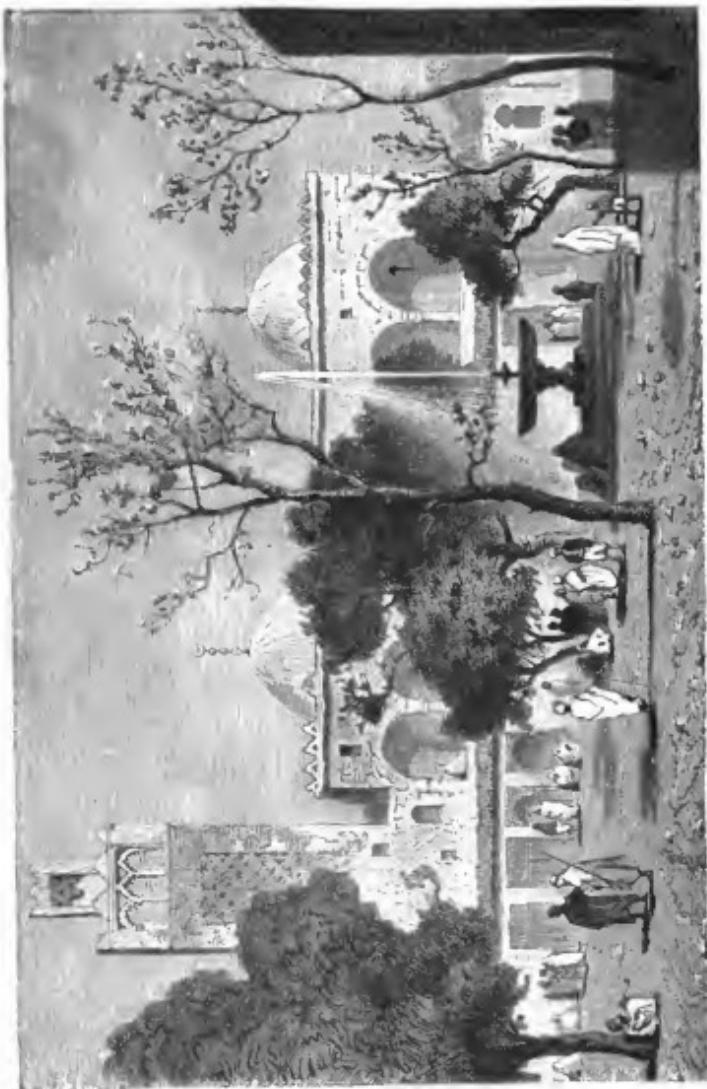
Our principal excursion was to the famous sources at the Dshebel Zaguan, which supplied Carthage with water, and still does the same for Tunis. The clear water comes out of the mountain in great quantities, and is surrounded

by the ruins of a grand Roman temple; to our disappointment, however, a high wall had been erected all round, so that we had to climb up a neighbouring rock in order to be able to admire the beautiful arcades and colonnades.

From Zaguan to the holy town of Kerwan the road leads through the district of the powerful Bedouin tribe of the Dshellas across the ruins of the Roman Zaccara, where there is now a miserable little village. The distance from the Zaguan sources to Carthage and to Tunis is over a hundred miles: this will give an idea of the magnitude of the aqueduct.



THE GREAT MOSQUE



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE HOLY TOWN OF KERWAN.

As already mentioned, Kerwan is the seat of the famous "High School of Africa," where the greatest savants and Koran teachers instruct. This, together with the tombs of many saints, amongst them being that of Sidi Olba, the friend and companion in arms of the Prophet, and the Mosque Sidi el Owaib, with the Beard of the Prophet, make Kerwan holy to the Arabs, and constitutes it the Mecca of the African Orient. Rich merchants from Morocco, Tunis, Cairo, and Tripoli retire to Kerwan when they get old, to lead a contemplative life. They leave their fortunes, as a rule, to mosques and religious foundations, which makes Kerwan one of the richest towns of the East. An infidel, whether Jew or Christian, is not allowed under any circumstances to enter this town, which is strongly walled in, and the fanaticism of the populace goes so far, that even the highest and most influential travellers can enter only in disguise, and furnished by an official order from the Bey to the Caid of the town. If we are not mistaken, Archduke Rainer of Austria had to make use of similar means some years ago, and when the famous traveller Archduke Louis Salvator,

during his yachting expedition down the Syrta in 1876, arrived at Susa and asked the Bey for an order to visit Kerwan, the Bey had to refuse, because he could not take the responsibility. But the Archduke entered the town all the same, though with a strong escort of soldiers and policemen. During the last years the Bey has been more and more under the influence of the Consuls, who often enough compelled him to give them orders for their *protégés* to visit the place.

With each European who visited the holy town in this way under the Bey's protection, the authority of the latter decreased, for in acting thus he breaks the Mohammedan law. Thanks to strong escorts, the lives of the travellers were protected, but there was no lack of stone-throwing, curses, and attacks. Even the Archduke Louis Salvator was treated in the same way.

The Tunisians believe that these increasing visits are the fault of Mohamed es Sadock, and it is no wonder that the latest rising directed originally against the French, turned finally against the Bey. Foreign saints from Tripoli and Algiers stir their fanaticism, and the excited Bedouins and inhabitants of the towns are told incredible stories of the wonderful victories of the Arabs over the French in Algiers, and of the coming help from the Sultan, so that it is not surprising if the movement spreads more and more.

Kerwan is not only one of the holiest but also one of the oldest towns of Mohammedan Africa, for its foundation dates from the year 34 of the Hegira. Destroyed repeatedly by the Berbers and rebuilt by the Arabs, it was the capital of the great Chalifate of Kerwan when Islam-

ism was in its flower, and was even for a long time the chief town of the whole Machreb. But its population was purely Arabic, religious, and devoted to the followers of the Prophet, hence its steady resistance to the attempts of the mighty ones to free it from the suzerainty of Mecca. These latter then chose other residences, and with the departure of the Court disappeared much of the glory and proverbial splendour of Kerwan, so often described by Ibn Kaldim and other Arab authors. The holy character of the town, however, has been preserved, and her complete exclusiveness against all foreign influences, and the conservative fanatical element which she harbours, did not permit her to alter her aspect or her architecture. With the exception of one or two towns in Morocco, there is no town in the whole Machreb which has preserved the Moorish style as well as Kerwan. Her mosques, palaces, and minarets nearly all date from the glorious Moorish period, and their interior is said to be magnificent. As to this latter statement, we have to be satisfied with rumours, for the foot of a Christian has not entered any of her mosques or minarets since Kerwan first existed.

As a rule, travellers approach Kerwan from Susa, which is only one day's journey from it. Already from a distance her numerous minarets and domes, the palm-trees towering over the white houses, and the high palaces and mosques make a wonderful impression. Unlike most other Arabic towns of the Machreb, Kerwan is situated in a plain ; no Kasba overlooks the town as in Tunis, Susa, Sfax, and others. High walls enclose this sea of houses from all sides, and would enable her if necessary to offer

considerable resistance. The town is, moreover, defended by some batteries of iron guns, though they have certainly not been in use since the time of the Turks, neither are the few hundred men which form the garrison, of much use. The safety of Kerwan lies in her holiness, and in the fanaticism of her inhabitants, who no doubt would carry on a struggle to the utmost.

Through whichever gate the town is entered, fondouks are met with, in which the caravans and pilgrims are quartered, presenting a lively picture all the year round. The more you penetrate into the town, which contains 30,000 inhabitants, the more do the streets improve : they get broader and cleaner, and the buildings higher and statelier. Kerwan is one of the few towns in the East which can be traversed without dirtying one's shoes. Nowhere are the heaps of dirt and rubbish seen here, nor the ruins and puddles so peculiar to the Orient. Almost every street contains a mosque or the tomb of a saint, a pious foundation or a Koran school, the bazaar streets alone excepted.

Unfortunately all the buildings but the mosques are constructed of brick-clay, which is not durable enough to preserve the Moorish stucco ornamenting a great many houses. These are additionally spoiled by whitewash covering everything with white colour. The mosques, however, are nearly all built of marble and other stones, most of them taken from the Roman ruins. Almost in every wall and in every one of the many minarets rising high and built in the Giralda style, fragments of Roman inscriptions and Roman architecture are found. The ori-

ginal constructors seem to have taken special pleasure in the marble columns with ancient Roman capitals, and whether of heathen or Christian origin, they have been used for the mosques. The innumerable domes of Kerwan are nearly all low, and without those exquisite plaster ornaments which are seen on the tombs of the Chalifs in Cairo. Their only decoration consists of vertical ribs converging towards the top, so that they are not unlike the knob of a keyless watch. More beautiful are the square minarets mounted with small towers. Most of the mosques bear inscriptions in Runic letters, a proof of their great age.

A great many rumours are afloat about the magnificent ornamentation of the interiors of these mosques. It is certain that no Christian ever entered any of them. The most important mosque is of course the Dshama Sidi es Sahib, which contains the beard of the Prophet, and which was thoroughly restored last in the year 820, showing a most venerable age. The beard of the Prophet is not visible, but is said to be immured in the Kibla. Several hundred marble columns adorn the interior of this mosque.

The high school of the Koran is situated next to the Dshama Sidi Ab del Kader el Dshilani, so called in honour of the great saint of Bagdad, who is at the same time the patron saint of the Machreb. Kerwan is the seat of Mohammedan learning ; it possesses a very valuable library of written books, and there are still several hundred learned men occupied copying the Koran. The orthodox Mussulman hates the printed Koran which Europe manu-

factures, and must have a written one if the thick book were to cost him hundreds of piastres, and those who know its compass can form an idea of the time this must take to make. Kerwan is one of those towns which produces these written Korans.

Besides its holiness, Kerwan also boasts of many industries, and extensive bazaars, in which magnificent carpets, woollen covers, beautiful silks, and perfumed essences are sold. The carpets of Kerwan are as famous throughout the Machreb as those of Persia. The dyed leather of Kerwan competes in quality and value with that of Morocco, and their saddlery and shoes are famous amongst the Bedouin tribes, and even with the Tuaregs. The town is, at the same time, the most important mart for provisions and cattle in the Regency, so that her inhabitants derive also a large income from this.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE BEDOUINS.

THOUGH European civilisation can boast of considerable success in the North of Africa, it is limited to the towns and their Moorish inhabitants. The light of Christendom penetrated in these directions, and brought culture in its train ; against the bulwarks of Islam alone all attempts were in vain. Though in the immediate neighbourhood of Europe, Africa remained true to the traditions of that faith whose Rome is Mecca, and whose prophet is Mohammed. Many times in the course of centuries, Europe had got a firm footing on the coasts of that continent, but, strange to say, it was always the populace of those seemingly uninhabitable deserts which conquered mighty Europe. Three Carthages were built and destroyed. Large provinces submitted to European culture, and were reconquered by Islam. Small Mohammedan states like Tunis held in their hands the trade and navigation of the first powers, and ruled the Mediterranean absolutely. They possessed great colonies in Europe, and most of the maritime countries were subject to them. To this day a piece of Europe is in the hands of Islam ; and if France, on the other hand, conquered Algiers, this

has, until now, been a loss to her, and the possession has to be defended by armies and cannon. The Arab will yield and die, but he will not easily submit to civilisation.

The Bedouins are a proof of this. The great wars and battles took place on the frontiers of their desert. They themselves took part in it, and in the neighbouring Algiers they have continued to exist under military discipline and guardianship these fifty years. They come in constant contact with Europeans, but, contrary to other nomadic tribes, they neither adopted the habits, the products, nor the language of their conquerors ; they are to this day fanatical followers of their Islamitic traditions, and despise the Christian and his religion. Their religion also promises them heaven. They enjoy liberty, this gift from God, beyond measure. They have their wife, their horse, their subsistence, and a territory, as large as Europe, over which they are absolute rulers.

They are not to be envied from our point of view. Though we visit them, and their mode of living interests us for some days or weeks, no European would like to change with them. But they avenge themselves, and pity us in the same way as we pity them. The dwellings of the Bedouins are where the mountains of Northern Africa flatten towards the desert, near the rivers and in the steppes. They are never alone. They wander about with their families and their tribes, and pitch their tents in different places. The traveller, on leaving the coast of the Mediterranean and roaming through Barbary south of the mountains, meets them everywhere. They do not salute travellers, but neither will they hurt them except they

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penetrate to the borders of Tripoli into the deserts, or under extraordinary circumstances—during war, for instance. They may be compared to wandering peasants who understand the use of arms. If they are asked where they are going, they shrug their shoulders, and say, “Whither it pleases God to direct us!” Though a good deal is known about them, much of their way of thinking, their family life, and traditions are wrapt in mystery. The reports of travellers are often contradictory. Some think them garrulous, others reticent, good-natured and noble, cunning or superficial.

I have been living with them some weeks in their tents. I accompanied them in their wanderings, attended their festivals, saw their work and their family life, and will try to describe their peculiarities.

Though nomads in the widest sense of the word, they have a certain organisation in Tunis and Algiers. Their “Douars” or villages consist of a number of tents whose inhabitants are generally subject to the oldest and richest Bedouins. Several Douars, sometimes many miles distant from each other, form a Ferka (section) which is ruled by a Sheik. Every Bedouin tribe, of which there are a great many, has, according to its size, several Ferkas, which together are subject to a common head—the Caid. This division goes still further in Algiers, where several tribes unite to a “great caidate” or “Aghalik,” over which presides a Caid el Caid, or Caid of Caids, or Agha. Moreover, a Caid is appointed for every tribe, who has to sit as judge, and to marry and divorce parties. These magistrates receive in Algiers fixed salaries from the

French Government, which range from 1500 to 12,000 francs. In Tunis, where no officials get salaries, with the exception of the Ministers, the Caids, and Califs, or rather their representatives, make themselves paid by levying taxes from the Bedouins, which their "Hamba," or policemen, collect for them.

In Algiers the Bedouin chiefs have to submit to the watchful control of the French military authorities, and they have to be satisfied with what they get. In Tunis, on the other hand, they possess the utmost arbitrary power, which they abuse thoroughly. They are obliged to collect the taxes for the Government, which amount to 42 piastres ( $\text{£}1$ ) per head, and which must be paid, or their Caids and Sheiks confiscate cattle or goods. They have also to pay for the trouble of collecting, as the Government does not pay its officials. Besides all this, the Bedouin has also to pay taxes for every business transaction, for every head of cattle in his possession, and for every acre of land, so that it is scarcely possible for him to save much. Some of the tribes have thoroughly renounced the authority of the Bey, and live quite independently of the Regency in those southern parts which belong properly to the Sahara ; they pay no taxes whatever, and live in constant strife with the loyal tribes and Tunisian authorities.

These are principally the Worchama, the Udena, and other powerful and warlike tribes mentioned farther on.

These taxes are the only tie which unites the Bedouins with the capital and Government ; they otherwise enjoy perfect freedom all over the country—choose their habita-

tions wherever they wish, and do what they like. Their dwelling-places, consisting sometimes of hundreds of small black tents pitched together, are often met with by the traveller. Though the soil is very fertile in these parts of the Sahel, it cannot be cultivated continuously because of the dearth of water. Only three months are required to ripen corn from the time of sowing. The harvests, considerable notwithstanding all disadvantages, are over in April or May, and the Bedouin then wanders with his tribe or Douar to another district to cultivate another piece of primitive soil.

I made my first acquaintance with the Bedouins in the Tunisian desert on the way to Kerwan. It was night, and I had joined a caravan which was going the same way. The men, wrapt in their white bornouses, sat on camels or small donkeys, carrying their flintstone guns across their shoulders. The women trudged barefoot by their side in the sand without appearing to mind this want of gallantry on the part of their husbands. In this country one is often inclined to take the men to be the weaker sex. We had marched silently for many miles across desolate tracts of desert without meeting with any Bedouin encampment, and I proposed repeatedly to stop and rest for the night; but our "Chrebir," the old chief of the caravan, knew his way. He knew we should not be long before finding a Douar, and he was not mistaken. Towards midnight we heard the barking of dogs, and soon after we saw the low black tents in the same direction, rising above the light desert plain like mole-hills. These Bedouin dogs, though despised and considered

unclean, are as fanatical Mohammedans as their masters—they scent a Christian at a great distance, and can only be driven back by heavy blows. Whoever travels in those parts must be provided with a good whip besides a gun. Every Douar is watched by a great number of dogs, which are constantly quarrelling with each other; but on being invaded by a wild animal or visited by a Christian they unite against him at once. At last we reached the Douar, where the Sheik awaited us quite dressed.

"Ya mul el chreima, dif Chrebbi!"—"We are the guests of God, Master!" our Chrebir said to him. "Morhaba bich!"—"Be welcome," answered the Sheik, driving his wives out of the tent at once to light a fire and to take the saddles off our horses and camels. Neither men nor women undress at night, so that their toilet is soon finished. After a little while, dishes with fuming kuskuss were put before us, and a few empty tents prepared. The sun had scarcely risen next morning when our animals were ready for starting again, and the Chrebir drove me from my couch. "Everything is ready, Arfi," he said. With a hurried good-bye we left the Douar, the Sheik refusing the silver piece I offered him as a gratuity. "This is not usual with us," explained the leader of the caravan; "God will repay it him, sir!"

A greater hospitality than that of the Bedouins can scarcely be imagined. Though lessened lately by the increase of European travellers, the same cordiality exists towards their own tribes. I have experienced it repeatedly while travelling here. There was only one exception

to this, when once on my arrival a great number of savage dogs jumped at me and threatened to tear me to pieces, and a Bedouin sitting quietly before his tent without driving them away ; but scarcely was this noticed by two other Bedouins of the Douar, when they ran after the dogs with cudgels and drove them away, all the time abusing their comrade. Only on leaving did I hear that this latter had been compelled by the whole Douar to provide all meals for myself and my companions. However, they did not always refuse the gratuities I offered them, and in the towns and larger places of the Oases this hospitality and deference is more on their tongues than in their hearts. The Arabs there boast a good deal, and often take God's name in vain, but they keep their hands on their pockets, and so have damaged the reputation of their proverbial hospitality. But the Bedouins of the desert keep to their ancient traditions.

Even a stranger can at once distinguish the Bedouins from the Arabs of the towns, though they are dressed exactly alike. The nomad is tall, robust, and fine, his face is sunburnt, and his eye frank and fiery. The Bedouin takes long strides and walks quickly, generally supporting himself by a long carved staff, knob downwards. The Arab of the towns, on the other hand, makes short steps and walks very slowly. The Bedouin is sober, abstemious, and persevering, but he dislikes work. He is almost exclusively a shepherd. The nomads of the Northern Sahara cultivate a small tract of land, but they do not work seriously, and as a rule hire a few people from town to look after their fields. His habitation is

more than modest. Let us look at his tent. His wife has plaited the tent-cover of black camel-hair. A vertical pole supports the tent in the centre, while a few camel bones stuck in the ground serve as tent-pegs. In front the cover hangs down so that one must stoop low to enter. But even inside, it is difficult to stand upright. The prop in the centre divides the reception-room and the harem; that is to say, one half belongs to the husband, the other to wife and children, and no man is allowed to enter the latter except the lord and master. A cover of camel's-hair forms the dividing screen, while on the floor between the two parts, the effects of the little household are heaped up, as, for instance, superfluous covers, skins, and garments, etc. Over the bare floor a mat of "Halfa" (esparto grass) is spread, the hiding-place of innumerable fleas — the faithful and infallible companions of the Bedouins. The mat is never trod upon by shoes or slippers, as these have always to be left outside the tent. This, as well as spare mats, carpets, and other articles, the Bedouin fastens carefully by means of iron rings to his tent-pole, so that they should not be stolen at night. In a corner of the tent the fuel is heaped up—sheep and camel dung only, for wood is not to be found in the desert. When travelling, the Bedouin women carefully pick up every dry branch of rosemary or of the olive-tree. In the part belonging to the man, the furniture is completed by saddle and harness if he has a horse, and by his arms, generally old flintstone guns and pistols. The Bedouin knows neither bed nor chair. The same mat on which he sits with crossed legs during his leisure

hours in the day serves him as bed. He wraps himself in his bornous, puts a hide under his head, and sleeps soundly. They feel so uncomfortable on a chair that they prefer to sit on the floor when they appear in European houses.

So much for their miserable household. Their dress is equally poor. A long, coarse linen shirt, wide trousers reaching down to their knees, where they are gathered in, a waistcoat, sometimes embroidered or ornamented with silver buttons, compose their dress, over which they throw the indispensable bornous. An old fez, with a small tail instead of the blue tassel, covers the back of their head, and over it the white turban is wound. They generally draw the hood of the bornous over it all, be it ever so hot, and crown the whole with a straw hat of immense size with a broad brim. Rich Bedouins wear short stockings reaching to the middle of the calf. Their feet are covered by light slippers of leather or felt, which the rider replaces by top-boots of red or yellow Morocco. Their handkerchief, if they have one, hangs by a corner on the outside of their bornous. Their head is entirely shaved, with the exception of a tuft of hair left on the top which is hidden under the fez. But as they never take off their head-covering under any circumstances, this baldness never shows.

It is a mistaken notion to think that the nomadic Bedouins smoke much. They, as well as the Arabs in small towns, smoke rarely, and when they do, they are satisfied with a very small quantity of tobacco, which they smoke in hollow sheep's ribs—an enjoyment which we

do not envy them. More frequently they take to the intoxicating Takruri (wild hemp), which, when dry, is smoked like opium. Their most general vice amongst men and women is—taking snuff. Almost every woman, when she gets old, possesses her snuff-box, and as soon as I gave them any money they bought snuff. Chewing is, on account of the dearth of water in the desert, very general. They do not chew tobacco, but a sort of lozenge, made of resin, which, after having been chewed for long gets tough like india-rubber, and keeps the mouth constantly moist.

The Bedouins, like all the other nomads throughout the whole Machreb, men as well as women, tattoo themselves. The men cover their arms and calves with the funniest devices, the women in addition tatoo face, neck, and chest. Shoes and gloves seem so strange to these Bedouin women, that I have been asked why my hands are so black. I was riding, and wore black kid gloves, which the people believed to be tattooed hands. Besides a little square which the women have tattooed on each cheek, they also have a cross between the eyebrows, which was always a puzzle to me. At last, while turning over the leaves of a history of Carthage, I found that those natives who were converted to Christianity were exempt from certain taxes. As a mark of distinction they had to wear a small cross, which custom had probably been preserved through centuries, down to the time of Islam, whereas its Christian origin has been forgotten.

Tattooing proves the great superstition of the Bedouins, which they share with all peoples of low culture. Their

great fear is the evil eye—the “mal ochio” of the Italians. If, for instance, they have succeeded in tattooing a pretty design, they at once add to it two tiny squares with a cross above as a sort of spell, to prevent the design from disappearing again! The number “five” (*chamsa*) must never be pronounced in their presence, and their children never be inquired after, without adding the words “God bless them,” or “God be with them.” It may seem incredible, but it is true all the same, that the spittle is considered to this day, just as it was in Biblical times, a magical remedy, and I have been told by many that you cannot please a Bedouin father more than by spitting into his children’s faces. Other travellers, as Playfair, Lubomirsky, etc., mention this circumstance repeatedly. I need not say that I have never made use of this means of making myself agreeable.

Every Bedouin—man, woman, and child—wears, either round the neck or on the arms, a number of “charms,” such as a porcupine’s hand-shaped paw; for the hand is, according to their ideas, the most effective talisman against the “evil eye.” Even horses and geese have these “charms” hung round their necks, attached with cords, and one often meets horses entirely covered with these decorations. If anybody leaves a Bedouin family, water is poured out after him when he leaves the tent, and sometimes they sprinkle black coffee on the hoofs of the horses. All this will show how much the Bedouins resemble the Indians in their mental and social life.

But in regard to religion, hospitality, and politeness, they stand high above the red-skinned nomads of the far

West, and are altogether above them in respect to the degree of culture. Their greetings, for instance, testify to a fear of God as well as to politeness. If people of equal social position meet, they kiss each other on the shoulder while uttering all kinds of unctuous sentences. Inferior people kiss their betters a little lower on the chest. If the difference is still greater they kiss the hands or sleeves of the one above them, and put their forehead several times on the place kissed. If they are riding, they dismount if a Caid or Sheik should pass them, and bow standing. People of the lower orders greet each other by touching their mouth with their own fingers, after having touched each other's hands. It is scarcely necessary to mention that these salutations, where kissing is so prominent, are only meant for men; women are merely saluted by words.

Whatever the Bedouins do is done in the name of God; scarcely a question is answered, scarcely an act is perpetrated without the exclamation of "El Hamdullah!" ("God be praised!"). A greater piety, which also manifests itself on occasions which we Europeans like to keep secret, can scarcely be imagined. The number of prayers ordered by Mohammed to the faithful is five daily, with as many ablutions before each prayer. But as water is scarce in the desert, prayers would be very rare if the Koran did not permit the prayers to be reserved for a fitting time provided the prescribed number be made up.

The estimates of the Government as well as the assertions of travellers vary very much as to the number and strength of the Bedouin tribes in Tunis. Not only is

the taking of a correct census here and in all Mohammedan countries out of the question, because of the absolute exclusiveness and invisibility of women, slaves, and children, but the Arab of some parts considers the counting of the members of his family as contributing to the "mal ochio" (evil eye), and opposes it wherever he can. In Tunis itself the attempt of a census has never been made. The nearest statements as to the population of Tunis were made by Dr. Nachtigall and Maltzan, who mentions the single tribes and their strength in his archaeological work. According to him the number of nomads in the towns amounts to about 150,000; the number of those in the country and in the steppes to about 320,000. But Maltzan includes the 40,000 Dryd which inhabit the north of the Regency and are of Berber origin; there are also single Berber tribes in the western districts, so that the number of true Bedouins may be stated at 300,000 to 400,000 souls.

The most important nomad tribes of the Regency are—The Medalid, living between El Dshem and Sfax, comprising 20,000 souls. The Ulad Ann, on the upper course of the Siliana River, 10,000 souls. The Suassi, north of El Dshem, 8000 souls. The Farashish, near Tebessa, in the west of the Regency, 12,000 souls. The Dshelas, in the centre of Tunis, circa 25,000. Finally, the warlike Urgama, on the borders of Tripoli, and the Hammama in the Oasis district of Gaffa, both 30,000 souls strong, and always rebelling. These two latter tribes have no Caids, while almost all the others have.

## CHAPTER IX.

## WOMAN'S LIFE AMONGST THE NOMADS.

THERE are few nations on earth who concede to woman so low a position in proportion to man as the Arab nomads. The reason of this must not be looked for only in the low degree of their culture, but still more in their faith. Wherever Islamism penetrated, woman's position was lowered. It was so in Persia, in India, in Arabia, and Asia Minor. The Koran does not allow its followers to consider woman as a being equal to man, and this prejudice is so strong in all Mohammedan countries that all attempts at conversion and civilisation on the part of Christians will be in vain.

It can be safely assumed that the less woman is estimated amongst a people, the lower is the stage of their civilisation. The respect woman is held in is in proportion to the degree of culture, and rises with it, hence the equality of woman with man amongst the nations at the head of civilisation.

As long as religion does not enter into the matter, this humiliating relationship between the two sexes can be made to take a more favourable form with single races and tribes, but the Commandments of the Koran make this a

matter of impossibility with the Arabs. They have adhered firmly to the laws of their religion for twelve hundred years, and for twelve hundred years the position of their women has remained the same. Even the fifty years of French rule could not obtain an amelioration of the sad fate of the Arab women subjected to it. The "faithful" often humiliates himself: he will stoop to be your labourer, the servant of your servants; he will beg alms and execute your commands, but you cannot get him to show the least sign of respect or attention to his own wife, the mother of his children. He will caress his horse, stroke it and lead it gently, but he would not think of offering an arm to his wife. If an Arab lives in town, he has only one care, to hide her from everybody; if he lives in the country or in the desert, to make her work, for she is his slave.

To the Arab his wife is neither a companion nor a friend—not even a mistress. He scarcely believes that she has a soul like himself; she is an inferior being. In her youth she is the slave of his passions, and when she gets old and her charms begin to fade, she is put to the hardest labour. He beats her, does not give her sufficient food, and compels her to be servant of the young wife he has bought to take her place.

We can draw our own conclusion as to the character and disposition of these Bedouin women when we know the treatment they receive. If they know nothing of conubial faithfulness, and of domestic virtues, it is the fault of their religion and the fanaticism of their husbands. The Bedouin woman is possessed by only one feeling—abject fear and utter dependence on her lord and master.

We have seen that even in their tents, the dwelling-place of the man is strictly separated from that of the woman. One half of the tent is inhabited by the husband, and the other by two or three women, the more the better for the man, for a Bedouin woman is born to work. A



BEDOUIN TENT.

man acquires with his wife an indefatigable worker : she saves him double what she costs. The women not only look to their household, but plait the camel-hair covers, and make all the garments ; they tan hides, pitch tents, milk the sheep, and are, in short, servants, labourers, and wives in one person. They marry when they are from thirteen to fifteen years old, and are, each in their

turn, their husband's pets, at first. But at the age of twenty they are faded, and then begins their life of misery and care, though they never complain. They have no knowledge of a better existence, for every woman they know suffers and works like themselves. If a girl is born, the mother with the other women of the Douar lament that God has not given her a boy. From her earliest youth a girl is made to work, while a boy bustles about with the horses, shoots, hunts, and plays about in the open air as much as he likes. When the girl is fit for marriage, she is sold by her father to the suitor, be he ever so old, without being consulted in the least. Altogether, the state of affairs in regard to women is not unlike that amongst the North American Indians.

Women's dress is very peculiar in these parts, and so little subject to fashion, that the same may be seen to-day which was seen several hundred years ago, and what is worn in Persia and Arabia is also seen at the extreme border of Western Africa. Whether young or old, the Bedouin woman always wears a blue garment, which is neither sewn nor cut out: it is simply a single piece of coarse woollen material, double as large as a counterpane. This plaid they wind round their body, which is devoid of every other clothing, and fasten it with pins so ingeniously that it looks like a skirt of European cut. This singular toilet is tied round the waist with a cord and loosened above, forming a kind of pocket, which is used to carry provisions and other articles. This one garment is the only one women wear, and it leaves, of course, calves, neck, and arms entirely uncovered. Where no shoes,

stockings, or under linen is worn, there is, of course, no question of stays or other European articles of toilet. The jet-black hair is wound in little plaits round the head, and the latter is tied with a light-coloured, striped hand-kerchief, such as the negresses wear in the Southern States of America. This would complete the toilet of a Bedouin woman, if a few trinkets of silver, such as the pins for her dress, earrings, rings, and bracelets were not considered indispensable. Savings and legacies, rare as they are, these women always invest in such articles of jewellery. These latter are of the same shape and mounting shown us in museums as coming from the Etruscans. Their garments and utensils are the same as in Biblical times—convincing proofs of how conservative the Bedouins have remained to this day.

The household of a Bedouin is very simple, but it testifies to the woman's many-sided capacities, and to her great working power. Nearly every article, from the very tent down to her cooking-pan, is manufactured by her own hand. Mats and covers are plaited by her with astonishing cleverness ; the corn sack is also fabricated in a most original manner : it is made of an animal's skin which has been allowed to rot, so that the hairs come off easily. Then the skin is sewn together, and boiling tan poured through the opening. After standing like this a few days, the skin is tanned, the corn sack ready, and certainly more durable than any manufactured in our part of the world.

Before the tent stands, as a rule, an original oven, a sort of cauldron, built of clay with high walls, which is

dried by a fire lit on the floor. If the woman is going to bake bread, the wheaten grain is first turned into coarse flour by means of an antediluvian handmill of stone; this flour is then mixed with water and sheep's milk, and formed into small flat loaves, which are simply stuck on to the sides of the oven. The fire burning on the floor bakes the dough in a very short time, but the smoke of the camel and sheep dung, which is their fuel, communicates to the bread an unpleasant smell.

Meat is only eaten on festive occasions, and then only mutton. The national and favourite dish is the kuss-kussu. It is prepared in large, flat, wooden dishes, such as gold-washers use. The woman, in a way more practical than appetising, squirts water from her mouth over the dish, throws flour over it, and rubs it until little balls are formed. These are then steamed in a steamer, mixed with sheep's butter and little pieces of mutton, sometimes also with cut-up dates, and then eaten in enormous quantities. Dates and sheep's milk, sheep's cheese, in summer also oranges and sweet lemons, are the principal articles of diet of these involuntary vegetarians. It cannot be said that the above-mentioned dish is unsavoury, neither are several others of their national dishes—as, for instance, "Rfiva," a sort of cake with dates. During the first days of my stay, on the contrary, I liked them very much. But it is very trying to have to live on them solely for months, and I was glad to fall back upon milk and a few boxes of meat extract I had brought. I have mentioned the details of their cookery because I have found nothing about it in other books, and think an insight into their household very interesting.

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The meals are not partaken of by the whole family as with us. The Bedouin sits in his tent on the mat; the sons and his guests, even those of a lower position, sit down with him, and his wife and daughters wait upon him. The use of knives and forks they do not know yet, and everybody takes his share from the dish with his hands, while the women look on and wait. Only when all the men have done, may the women eat what remains. If water is at hand, the Arabs wash their hands and mouth carefully before and after meals. But where is water to be found in the Sahara? Sometimes I was unable to wash myself for days, and the Arabs when they wander through the desert fare even worse.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE COAST TOWNS OF THE SAHEL.

No part of the North African coast is so rich in towns as is that washed by the little Syrta. This part, adjacent to Tunis, the so-called Sahel, was already famous at the time of the Romans for its cultivation of olives ; and amid all the changes the Regency has undergone since those times, this cultivation has been preserved in the same perfection to the present day—and it still forms the chief industry of half a million of people who inhabit the Sahel.

But the primitive mode of production of the valuable oil has also remained the same. Steam-engines and steam-presses, and all other industrial acquisitions used by the Spanish and Italian cultivator, are alike unknown in Tunis. Therefore the Arabs of the Sahel lose much of the valuable produce by their native process. What they gain is, however, sufficient for the subsistence of the population, which on an average is wealthier here than in the north, or even in the south—rich mainly through its cultivation of dates.

Numerous Roman ruins of towns, bridges, and small settlements here testify to the high state of culture of the Sahel, which formed the province of Emporia in those

times. The towns of Neapolis, Horrea Cœlia, Hadrumetum, and above all Tysdrus, were situated here, and these, like the Islamic towns of to-day built on their ruins, were the places from which the export trade of oil and sheep's wool was carried on. With Islam and its buildings most of the ruins on the coast disappeared, only those inland being left—grand remnants of the glorious epoch of classical Northern Africa. Tysdrus, now called El Dshem, with its colossal amphitheatre, especially excites the admiration of all travellers, who go there in great numbers. Her colonnades towering in three stories, one above the other, her marble columns and galleries, most of them well preserved, make an impression all the more imposing as the environs are bare and desolate, and very much like a desert. On a closer inspection it is seen that 1500 years have, unfortunately, not elapsed without leaving their traces on those magnificent structures, and the west side is almost destroyed. When the invasion of the Arabs commenced, this amphitheatre served as a citadel. A Berber queen, called Kahina, intrenched herself with a number of warriors here, and resisted their attacks for three or four years—until an auxiliary power of the Berbers relieved the amphitheatre, changed for the moment into a fortress. This queen has not been forgotten amongst the inhabitants to this day. Another time, during the end of the seventeenth century, this amphitheatre again served as a fortress for some rebellious Bedouin tribes, and Mohammed Bey, the then ruler, was obliged to bombard this glorious building. The work of destruction dates from that time. It is to be hoped that the French

will not only conquer the country but also take care of those splendid ancient monuments, it is a duty incumbent on them.

Out of those ancient settlements mentioned above arose the present ports—Nebel, Hammamat, Susa, Monastir, and Mechdia, Susa being the largest and most remarkable one amongst them. The others are rarely visited by European steamers, Monastir excepted, which is built on a far projecting isthmus, and offers, through the Kuriat isles just lying before her bay, a better protection against storms than any other Tunisian harbour. Seen from the water, Monastir, with her high walls and battlements, her beautiful gates, constructed of antique materials, presents a very stately aspect. The olive trade, their principal industry, is almost entirely in the hands of the Italians and Maltese, who are the only Europeans here. The French element is in all these coast towns almost entirely absent, and the steamers calling here are also Italian. The bazaar of Monastir, or Mistir, as the Arabs call it, is very insignificant. Neither do the streets, most of them arched in, show anything remarkable. Interesting, however, is the subterranean sea-bath, no doubt dating from the time of the Romans. It is a very extensive cave, with several partitions, hewn in the rocks on the coast. To this day the cliffs there do not allow of bathing in the open sea, and as this cave is always supplied with fresh sea-water by the great flood-tides in the Syrta, it serves as a welcome bathing-place for the inhabitants.

Not far from Monastir there is a second small town, Mechdia or Media, which, though also built on the ruins

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of a Roman settlement, flourished during the Middle Ages, for here was probably the principal harbour of the Chalif-town of Kerwan. It possessed as late as the eleventh century, so says the famous Arabic historical writer El Bachri of Cordova, many splendid palaces and mosques, and was then an important town. But its ruinous condition of to-day does not point to that conclusion, and it affords no exception to the general decay of the scenes of a past glorious Arabian fairy world which has left no traces of its magnificence.

## CHAPTER XI.

## SFAX.

SFAX or Sfakes is the largest and mightiest town of the southern part of the Regency, and the principal harbour for the export of the dates of the Dsherid, as well as for all the produce of the Oases in the Shotts (the inland salt-lakes of the lesser Syrta). Though the harbour of Gabes is much nearer to these borderlands of the Sahara, the connection between it and them is so unsafe through the marauding Bedouins that the caravans prefer the longer but safer way *via* Sfax. The inhabitants of Sfax are the real merchants of the large districts as far as Tripoli and Algiers, and all the wholesale trade is in their hands. Sfax has also her industries—the rich garden produce of the environs, and finally the very lucrative revenues of the sponge trade in the Gulfs of Sfax and Gabes ; so that the inhabitants, notwithstanding the oppressions and extortions of the Government, are very wealthy, and are indeed the only population throughout the Mohammedan Machreb which has not shared in the general decay.

The aspect of the town, however, would not point to that conclusion. Seen from Tunis, Sfax looks like a Turkish town of the Middle Ages, with high walls, towers,

and battlements, behind which black cannon point their muzzles toward us. The many large gardens which the town's-people possess, and from which they derive a large part of their income, are several kilomètres distant from the walls, in the midst of the desert, and the tract of land situated between them and the town is also a sandy plain, void of all vegetation, which does not improve the aspect of the old town. There are only two gates in the high walls ; they are guarded by ragged Tunisian soldiers, and lead to the Arab quarter. The streets are narrow and comparatively clean, and the houses high. Sfax is, as a town, as little remarkable as any other town in Barbary. It is sufficient to see one to know them all. Every one has her walls, her principal mosque, and her Kasba, always in ruins, a true symbol of the Turks. The Kasba of Sfax is the best preserved I have seen throughout the whole Machreb, from Tetuan to Tripoli. Last year, at the time of my visit, the garrison consisted of an artillery officer and six or eight gunners, who had received no pay for months. The iron cannon date from the times of the Turks, and, no doubt, have neither been loaded nor fired since then.

The most beautiful and imposing building of Sfax is the great mosque, constructed entirely of stone, and containing a great many granite and marble columns, evidently of Roman origin. Sfax seems, like Tunis, to have made use of an old Roman town, perhaps Usila, as a quarry, for the stately buildings there often show fragments of Roman inscriptions, columns with Roman capitals, etc. The bazaar of Sfax is of special interest,

for, under the beautifully arched galleries, are piled up all those goods coming from the Oases of the Shott district which find their market here ; also the genuine produce of the Arabic stone industry, of which the whole district of the Oases on the Algerian frontier is the market. Sfax is a very exclusive town. Averse to all foreign influence and to every kind of immigration, and unwilling to amalgamate with any strange elements, even if they be Arabic, the Middle Ages have been preserved here to the present day, the mode of living of the inhabitants and their industrial produce, etc., being a proof of this. The state of affairs here would remind us of those of our free cities of the Middle Ages with their fortified walls, if the turban were not prominent in place of the helmet. Instead of spending their days in idleness, like the Moors in Tunis, the people of Sfax work from morning to night, and the activity noticeable in her streets distinguishes her from her sister towns advantageously ; the ten or twelve thousand inhabitants of the town owe their wealth to their industry. Outside the town, in their extensive gardens, men, women, and children are seen at work. The olive plantations, the date palm-trees, the almonds, oranges, and figs, require frequent tending and watering if they are to produce fruit in these dried-up parts. Every one of these gardens contains deep wells, from which water is got by a winch, and conveyed to the plantations. In walking through this region of enormous gardens I forgot sometimes that I was in Tunis,—the industry of the inhabitants rather reminding me of the fellahs in Egypt.

Though not fanatics, the Sfax people are very religi-

ous ; the five mosques which the town contains are, unlike those of other places in Tunis, generally filled with devotees, and even women and children join in the prayers, a circumstance which is rarely met with throughout the Machreb. There are legions of pious foundations, tombs of saints, and holy wells in Sfax, a further sign of their strict piety. Their dress is like that of the Tunisians, except that they do not wear the turban in so many little folds. The women wear the usual white loose garment ; only it is made here of thick wool instead of thin silk. Their feet are shod in the same clumsy wooden sandals as in all other towns of the East, but they have no strap across the top of the foot, but a wooden peg fastened between the big toe and its neighbour, and which gets larger towards the top. Of course it requires a special knack to be able to walk or run with this instrument of torture. The exclusiveness of Sfax is so great that an Arabian immigrant, whether he comes from Tunis or from the Oases, may not remain long in the town. He is put under a social ban ; he is ignored, nobody buys anything from him, and he is not received in the houses, so that he is at last compelled to seek shelter and occupation in the quarter of the Franks. Even the Beni M'seb or Mozabites, who are employed throughout the whole of Northern Africa, from Morocco to Arabia, as shampooers and bathing attendants in all the baths, are replaced here by citizens of Sfax. Of course Christians are hated : not one lives in the town ; they and the Jews—2000 in number—occupy a separate quarter on the sea-shore, which is lower than the town, and called Rabat. It is separated from the town completely

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by walls, and is itself surrounded by walls. Dirt and rubbish accumulate here to such a degree that it is surprising how the Maltese and Jews can live here without being carried off by fevers. Just as unpleasant as the streets of this Christian quarter are its inhabitants—true Levantines, with all the faults and sins of this mixed race. In their hands is the rather lively traffic between Sfax, the Oases of the inner country, and Europe: they load the many steamers and little sailing-boats which come from the harbours of the Riviera, and the export of esparto grass, olives, dates, sponges, and wool might be lucrative if the export duties had not reached such an enormous height as to make the exportation of some articles quite impossible.

## CHAPTER XII.

## GABES AND THE BORDER DISTRICT OF TRIPOLI.

NO district of the beautiful coasts of the Mediterranean is less known to the travelling public, and to the world in general, and is visited by fewer people, than the maritime countries of the little Syrta, that gulf which, south of Tunis, forces its way far into the African continent, and whose beauties have been immortalised by Strabo and Homer. Large islands with a tropical vegetation lie before the gulf, and shelter its deep blue surface from the open sea, where storms often rage. The two isles of Kerkenna in the north, and the extensive isle of Dsherba in the south, keep guard before the Triton lake of the ancients. We are here for the first time in the real tropics. Sfax, with her immense walls, her mosques, and the Kasba, is a true picture of Mohammedan Africa. Along the whole northern coast of the Dark Continent, even a single palm-tree is rarely to be met with, much less a palm-forest, such as we may see here, on the coast of the gulf of the little Syrta in so many places. South of Sfax, the Sahara comes close to the sea-shore, but we find at the same place the most fertile oases watered by the waves. That which heightens the charm of the gulf more than anything else is the

mixture of the tropical vegetation with that of the countries of the Mediterranean ; and while palm-trees alone flourish in Tripoli—farther south, olive, orange, almond, and citron trees grow, and amongst the fan-shaped crowns of the slender palms, European foliage, green and abundant, is interspersed. Here, on our journey southwards, we take leave of Europe, which has so far accompanied us by certain tokens of culture and vegetation.

Even the steamers which sail along the whole Mediterranean coast from place to place do not enter the gulf. Sfax is the most southern point of the Regency where the small Italian local steamers land ; they then cross over to Tripoli, and occasionally call at the isle of Dsherba. They never come near the charming gulf, which nature has done everything to make an earthly paradise.

At the deepest spot of the little Syrta, between Sfax and the isle of Dsherba, lies Gabes. Like the country which surrounds it, Gabes does not seem to belong to the lands of Islam, but to the Sahara. It is hardly a town, but an oasis in the truest sense of the word, a splendid palm-forest of several hundred thousand trees reaching down to the shore. Under the roof of their foliage the most beautiful fruit-trees of the Mediterranean grow exuberantly, and the leaves of the bananas stretch to a height of 30 or 40 feet. Vines are twisted round the trunks and connect branches and boughs with natural chains. As a tropical forest it can scarcely be surpassed in beauty, and it comes as a great surprise upon the traveller after the poor vegetation he has previously seen.

Delighted with this first oasis of Tunis, we approach

the land to cast anchor at some hundred yards' distance. The water is here so shallow that only the smallest sailing-boats can enter the mouth of the little river which forms the only harbour of Gabes. We enter a boat and are taken to the town, rowing between small fishing boats and frail Arab craft. It would be easy to construct a harbour, but what for? Biserta excepted, there is no harbour in all the Regency, and the ships remain in the open sea, unless they wish to get on a sandbank or run against a rock. Why a harbour in Gabes, which produces only dates and tropical fruit, and the inhabitants of which live in the happiest retirement, and have no wants, and who, moreover, would be quite unable to meet such an expenditure?

The great Gabes which once stood here when the Moors ruled supreme, and whose palaces and gardens, mosques and baths, were lauded by the historian, has disappeared, together with the wall which surrounded it. Built of the ruins of Tacape, Gabes was in her zenith three or four hundred years ago, but has now fallen into decay, like all the other towns of Tunis. As long as the Moors, who incline to a city life, remained there, the town maintained itself, but when the native Berber element got the upper hand again, everything became dislocated. Travellers will observe that here, as everywhere else in Tunis, the Berber, though preferring a fixed abode, is yet disinclined to live in towns. The Arab is a nomad, whereas the Moor prefers towns; the Berber, on the other hand, lives in properly constructed houses—which must not, however, stand in a town. No place inhabited by Berbers exceeds in size a European village.

The strangest example of the building customs of those aborigines of Tunis, the Berbers, is at Gabes. As soon as the Moorish inhabitants of this town—who are decreasing here, as well as in every other part of the Regency—were in a minority, so that certain quarters were no longer inhabited, the dwellers in the Berber quarters separated themselves completely from their Moorish fellow-citizens; others built their dwelling-places in the environs, and the Gabes of long ago consists to-day of three villages about one kilomètre distant from each other, while the precincts of the old town are covered by a luxuriant palm-forest. The peace of the inhabitants of Gabes is sometimes disturbed by the feuds between the Berbers and the different Moorish and Arabic races of the Oasis. Though in some cases a certain degree of intermixture took place amongst the different elements, yet there still exists, for instance, the village Shenini, which is exclusively inhabited by Berbers, who, thanks to this exclusion, have kept to the autochthonic language up to the present time.

There is nothing worth seeing in these villages besides the Roman ruins. The buildings are quite primitive, often composed of clay only, and covered with palm branches or planks of palm-tree wood. The representative of the Government—the Chalifa—also lives in a miserable building, and does not trouble himself much about the flock entrusted to his care. The first duty he has to perform, and by which he ingratiates himself with the Minister in Tunis, consists in sending the latter as much money as possible, which he on his part has to extort from the inhabitants of the Oases. The best opportunity for this

robbery is offered by the system of administering justice explained in a former chapter. A few policemen or hamba, and a garrison of a lieutenant and five or six unarmed soldiers, support his power and authority, which, however, only extend to the surrounding districts. The border districts beyond, in the desert between Tunis and Tripoli, are inhabited by those Bedouin tribes which are neither under the control of the Chalifa of Gabes, nor even under that of the Bey of Tunis. These Bedouin tribes are the real masters of the country south of Sfax and across the desert ; they levy contributions on all travellers, and make the route by land from Tunis round the little Syrta to Tripoli quite impassable. Even under a strong military escort no traveller would dare to take this way, unless he did not object to returning in Adam's costume. It is the practice of the Urgema Bedouins to watch the whole coast between Gabes and Sarsis, which is in the south-east. They allow every boat to land, and every caravan to pass, and then the travellers, whether Europeans, Arab, or negro, are surrounded, robbed of all they possess, including every vestige of their clothing, and are led stark naked to the next place, which is either Gabes or Sarsis. No traveller has escaped this fate for years on the land route to Tripoli, for if he should avoid the Urgemas, he is sure to fall into the hands of the marauding Nuail Bedouins.

The French Expedition even was unsuccessful in its attempt, when laying telegraphs as far as Gabes, to extend them in a direct line to Tripoli, though it had an escort of several hundred soldiers. It was found necessary to

lay a cable from Gabes through the little Syrta, and then to connect it with Tripoli by land lines carried a hundred miles to the east of these dangerous districts.

Formerly, it was customary with Jewish merchants to swallow gold pieces, in order to hide them from the robbers. If the Bedouins found it out, they used to cut open their bodies and take the gold out. Latterly they have become a little more polite; if they suspect people who fall into their hands, they submit them to a hot-water cure, *i.e.* they treat them with hot water for days, until their object is attained in a natural way. They watch especially for Arab women and negresses, as they always wear earrings and many necklaces.

Sarsis, the most south-eastern point of Tunis, is situated on the little Syrta, and consists only of a few huts between palm-groves and olives. It is entirely subject to the Bedouins, who make the neighbourhood insecure. A ship rarely lands here; the small trade of the place is carried on by boats which communicate with the neighbouring isle of Dsherba. At present there is no regular post in Gabes, but Sarsis is still more secluded from the outer world. Perhaps the good position and the fertile soil of the environs will procure for it a better fate under French rule.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE OASES OF SOUTHERN TUNIS.

SOUTHERN TUNIS on both sides of the large salt-marsh, Sebcha Pharaon, which latter reaches far into Algiers, is a beautiful country of palms, which is not surpassed by anything on the shores of the Nile. Thirty oases lie close together in a row, and divide the desert land of the ancient Numidia from the large salt lake, which is dry during nine months of the year, and which is thought by archaeologists to be the famous Triton lake of antiquity. This palm-region, *par excellence*, is known in Africa under the name of Beled-el-Dsherid, and no fruit is valued higher than the sweet, large, and juicy Dsherid date, which also fetches the highest prices in European markets. The palm-forests of Gabes and Sarsis contain the most magnificent trees, but their fruit is scarcely ever eaten by the poorest Bedouins ; as a rule, it is used only as food for horses and mules. It is only farther inland that the fruit ripens. According to an old Arabian proverb, the date-palm must have the foot in water and the head in fire, and this is nowhere more the case than in the oases of the Dsherid.

Travellers have described over and over again the grand impression which the view of an oasis makes after a

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long journey in the desert ; and many oases as I saw during my travels in Africa, it was always with fresh delight. Nature shows itself here in threefold abundance. The slender stems of the palm-trees, often reaching a height of 100 feet, display their transparent rustling canopy, whose fan-like branches, twisted and entwined, droop gracefully downwards. The sun is a necessity to them, and while they rejoice in his burning rays they keep the earth at their feet in cool shade, and thus aid the growth of the figs, oranges, lemons, almonds, olives, and pistachio trees. These latter grow between the palms, and under them, contrasting in their deep shades with the glaring light of the desert ; the damp ground is covered by the most luxuriant growth of herbs and grass. It is therefore a threefold vegetation ; and if one considers that an oasis extends over several miles, and also remembers the bare desolate desert land in the midst of which this tropical paradise arises, the enthusiasm of the traveller will be understood when first he beholds on the horizon the dark horizontal line which denotes the oasis at the distance. The oasis is not only a delicious rest for the traveller, but is a beneficent creation for the Arabs, who through it gain their livelihood, and owe to it a certain peace and repose.

The oases of the Beled-el-Dsherid are divided into four large groups, those of Nefza, Tozzer, and Gaffa, the two first-named bordering on the Shott. The largest group—that of Gaffa—is thirty English miles distant. This classification, however, is of no importance, as the administrative grouping is a different one.

Of the oases in the Dsherid, Gaffa is the largest, and coming from the North, it is the first met with on the river-course of the Oned Baiach. Situated on the low tableland in the centre of the river-valley, it possesses a palm-forest of about 200,000 trees, and is inhabited by from 3000 to 4000 Arabs and Berbers, a small number compared with that which once inhabited the large town of Gaffa, the capital of ancient Numidia, on whose ruins the present Gaffa stands. On beholding this splendid palm-forest, and the lively, bustling Arabic traders, a traveller would scarcely suppose that once a town stood here, which, according to Sallust, was founded by the Lybian Hercules, and remained for a time the residence of Jugurtha! The name is all that is left to-day. No ruins except the Thermae betray the past! Palaces and temples, and even the stones of which these were built, have disappeared. Most of the Arabian houses are built of air-dried bricks, covered with palm branches; a few mosques only and the Dar-el-Bey are constructed of stone, without possessing any architectural beauty. The Dar-el-Bey is the official residence of the Caid of Gaffa, who is at the same time the Caid of the whole Tunisian Dsherid. The few European travellers coming here generally stay at the Dar-el-Bey, for the only Fonduk in Gaffa resembles a dunghill rather than a place in which to house visitors. Immediately under the Dar-el-Bey is the largest of the three springs, rich in water, to which Gaffa owes her wealth, even her very existence, and which, forming quite a river all the year round, flows through the oases. The Arabs, destructive as they are, managed to leave the

Numidian baths alone, and they use these ancient basins surrounded by walls for bathing purposes to this day. Next to the Dar-el-Bey is the Termyl-el-Bey, *i.e.* the bath of the Bey ; and joined to this are two open baths of about thirty feet diameter : the one next to the Termyl-el-Bey is for men, the one farther off for women. The water-course from the bath of the Bey flows into the men's bath, and from there into the women's, so that the feminine world of Gaffa cannot possibly distinguish itself by cleanliness, even if so inclined. The Jews of Gaffa—for there is a Jewish colony here as well—are not allowed to bathe together with the Mohammedans : they make use of a reservoir within the large citadel, also of Numidian origin. The water is mineral, and springs from the earth at a temperature of 28 degrees Celsius.

The largest structure in Gaffa is the Kasba or citadel, forming an extensive square with two mosques inside the yard. Here most of the remnants of the Roman town are found, for nearly every wall shows fragments of Roman columns, inscriptions, and capitals, etc. Threatening as these walls may look to this day, they are approaching decay, and Gaffa altogether is, notwithstanding her temporary prosperity, far from what it was some hundred years ago when Arabia was in her flower. Many houses are in ruins ; of the numerous mosques, scarcely half a dozen remain. The largest mosque shows a pretty minaret in the Italian campanile style, but the Arabs use unfortunately only raw earth for their beautiful wall ornaments and arabesques, so that within a few years they are defaced or quite gone.

The garrison of the citadel consists of an officer and a few artillerymen, who possess neither cannon nor any other military weapon ; but they suffice for the maintenance of order in the peaceful villages of the oases of Gaffa.

About twelve kilomètres distant from Gaffa extends, at the foot of the high, steep mountain chain of Dshebel Arbet, the palm-forest of the oases of El Gettar. This oasis, with its pretty white dome-like structures, its gardens and palm-groves, and the mountains in the background, is if possible still more beautiful than Gaffa. The water here is not nearly so plentiful, and camels raise it with difficulty from draw-wells. But the date-palm is here so exclusively the source of livelihood of the few hundred inhabitants that there is no choice left to them, and they must get water at any price. The stem of the palm serves as timber for their huts, the branches form the roofs, the inner bark is used for basket-work and mats, the date itself is their food, and finally the juice (called Lacm) is, when fresh, a cooling and pleasant drink. Any other provisions they may need, they obtain by barter. The date-palm has an additional value in the eyes of the lazy Arabs, it requires but little tending and nursing. During the desert-wind, called Chamsin, the crowns of the palm-trees are tied together upwards, wherever they grow singly, so as to offer to the wind a smaller area of resistance ; the beautiful trees then look from a distance like gigantic umbrellas turned inside out. During the time of flowering, the Arabs accelerate the fecundation of the trees by caprification, *i.e.* they shed upon the female

flowers the pollen of male flowers. Sometimes palm-trees are seen without tops, they show only the high stems,



OASIS—DATE-HARVEST.

black and bare, and instead of a crown on their highest point, is an immense straw hat.

These are the trees which are tapped to obtain the

palm-wine. For this purpose the Arabs make a deep cut in the top, from which the sweet milky juice called Lacm emerges, and is caught up in vessels. But this juice must be used at once, as it ferments within one or two days, and has an intoxicating effect. Trees tapped in this way bear no fruit within the year, sometimes not for two years, and it also happens that they die while other stronger trees can stand this tapping for several years. For a speedier cure of the cut this latter is covered with the above-mentioned straw hat, so often seen on bare palm-trees in Tunis. Therefore palms here do not always show themselves in that attractive form which we are accustomed to admire in Nice, Bordighera, and Naples. When they are robbed of their gracefully arched top, as is often the case, it is the general mass, not the single tree, which impresses the spectator. The number of palms in the Beled-el-Dsherid is enormous. The oases of Nefzani, south of the salt marsh, contain not fewer than 300,000 trees; that of Gaffa, 200,000; in el Guettar a palm-forest extends over a tract of land three kilomètres long, and the entire region north of the Sebcha Pharaon possesses no less than a million and a half of palm-trees, with as many olive, orange, and almond trees growing between. These oases of Beled-el-Dsherid constitute the extreme southern point of North African culture; then follows fourteen days' journey of desert; southwards the oases of Chadames is the next station, an isle in the midst of the Sahara, this plain of sand and stone extending over a thousand miles.

The inhabitants of the Dsherid are a singular race, full of life and pleasure-seeking, and in their habits resembling the black African hordes. The Arabian invasion has given them their religion, but the commandments of the Koran have not impressed them as they have the Moors of the towns, and they cannot deny their descent from the aboriginal Berbers; we might even go farther and prove their relationship to the negro; their faces, the form of their heads, and their expression, remind one of the latter. It is possible that a similar climate and other circumstances may have influenced this likeness to the southern aborigines, but it is too striking not to point to a common origin.

The life of these people living in the Oases is a very peaceful one,—one might even call it happy if it were not that the oppressions of the Tunisian Government and the heavy taxes make this an utter impossibility. Though appearing rarely, the European traveller is received in the oases with kindness and hospitality, contrary to the reception given him in the north at Kef and Kairwan. Neither is the treatment of the Jews, who live in great numbers in these oases, nearly as strict or contemptuous as in the north.

Gaffa and Tozzar are also the seats of some important industries which find their markets in the bazaars of Tunis, Sfax, and other places. The coloured woollen covers are made here which form the only embellishments of Moorish beds, also bornouses, woollen handkerchiefs for the Bedouin women, haiks and other textile fabrics. Caravans carry these goods in five or six days to Tunis, and in one or two to

Sfax, from whence they are often exported by sea. Gaffa is also the chief market for the Hammama Bedouins, who live in the steppes north of the oasis ; they are the mightiest nomads of the Regency, much feared by the Tunisian Government. These Hammama possess large herds of cattle, which supply the inhabitants of Gaffa with enormous quantities of raw material ; they in return obtain their arms, ammunition, clothes, and utensils from Gaffa, unless they manage to steal them from the caravans.

The Hammama are great robbers, and troublesome subjects of his Highness the Bey. It is in vain the latter asks for the taxes due, in vain he sent his brother and successor, the "Bey of the field," at the head of his valorous army against the hordes of the Hammamas ; after an expensive campaign, they always returned to the capital without having effected their purpose, and might consider themselves fortunate if the Hammamas did not take their arms and steal their trousers, as happened some years ago. For this reason, the Bey has latterly given up all military expeditions against the Hammamas, and their companions in arms, the Urgunas, so that these Bedouin hordes are now virtually independent.

With the inhabitants of the Dsherdid, the Hammamas generally live in peace, and religious intolerance is unknown to them, which is sufficiently proved by the one fact, that they have allowed Jews to join their tribes. Whence these Jews came, whether they were really the descendants of a vanished tribe of Israel, as some authors state, or whether they left Tunis and joined the Hammamas from speculation, is difficult to say. They have adopted the

habits and customs, and also the dress of the nomads completely, so that they can scarcely be distinguished : the Bedouins alone know them. They look after the trade of the tribe with whom they live ; they buy and sell wool and skins, sell the goods stolen by the Bedouins, and supply the latter with the intoxicating lacm—*tout comme chez nous*. They are, however, not allowed to marry into the tribe, nor to pitch their tents amongst the Arabs. They live outside the encampment—a Jews' quarter built of tents. At any rate, their presence amongst the Arabic nomads is very remarkable.

South of the great Shott there is the extensive district of the oases of Nefzani, with palm-forests of more than 300,000 trees, and with from 18,000 to 20,000 inhabitants, living in forty villages. Though they are subject to a Caid appointed by the Bey, his authority is not great, because of the great distance from the capital and the total absence of a garrison. Many of the villages are surrounded by walls, because of the attacks of the invading Nuails and other tribes from Tripoli. South of the Nefzani villages the desert begins again, and there, in the endless sandy waste, the undecided southern frontier of the Regency of Tunis must be looked for.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE INLAND SEA OF TUNIS.

IF from the oasis of El Gettar, the highest point of Dshebel Arbet is reached, situated 3000 feet above the sea, a beautiful view presents itself all round the region of the oasis of Dsherid as well as of the endless desert which, to the north and east, extends over hundreds of miles, and ends on the coasts of the little Syrta.

Southwards the eye is fascinated by another endless plain, as white as snow, which is formed by the dried-up bed of Sebcha Pharaon, once the Triton lake. The whiteness of this basin, which from Dshebel Arbet is seen in its whole extent, owes its appearance to the large salt deposits which the great masses of water collecting in winter leave behind after evaporation during the hot months. I imagined to myself this monotonous plain as covered with the waves of the sea, the coasts being formed by those fertile oases which are the wealth of the Regency. From our high point of observation, the apparently narrow tract of land is seen which divides the dried-up basin from the coasts of the little Syrta. A small canal might unite both basins, might conduct the water of the Mediterranean deep into the Tunisian Sahara—even farther, into the very

heart of Algiers, south of the oasis of Biskra, and this colossal district of oases would be accessible to navigation, trade, and commerce, all of which is to-day restricted to a few caravans. What an aspect if these magnificent palm-forests were washed by the blue waves ; if large ships and small white sailing-boats were to traverse and enliven this wide plain ; if, in short, the ship of the sea were to replace the ship of the desert, and coming from Genna and Trieste could disembark her goods at Biskra, in the midst of the Sahara ! It was a mental *fata morgana* which can be painted here in the most enticing colours, and which evidently induced the French captain Roudair, and later Lesseps, to plan the letting of the sea into the Sahara as well as an inundation of the region of the Shott, a project of which they endeavoured to show the many great practical advantages. This matter has been talked about for several years, and it has given rise to so many controversies that in describing the southern part of the Regency one cannot avoid some allusion to it.

Maltzan, who undertook several most valuable archaeological journeys through the Regency, explains the name of Sebcha Pharaon by the fact that the Arabs in a figurative sense take this marsh to be the Red Sea, in which the Egyptian King was drowned when pursuing Moses. "The Sebcha," says Maltzan, "is nothing else but the fabulous Triton River, which, according to Ptolemy, flowed towards the Mediterranean and formed three lakes, the Lybian, the Triton, and the Pallas Lakes—a tradition resting no doubt on the legend that the whole Sahara was once a sea connected with the Mediterranean. This

tradition is not entirely contradicted by geologists, as the fossil shells of the Sahara resemble very much those of the shores of the Mediterranean, and there are besides many geological signs which might be taken as proofs that at a remote geological period the Sahara was really a sea, connected with the Mediterranean. Mythology mentions this as the birthplace of Pallas, and Pindar transposes even Jason and his Argonauts to this sea."

So far Maltzan, while other historians, as Seylax, for instance, do not suppose the Triton Lake to have been in the Sebchas of Southern Tunis at all, but in the small lake between the isle of Dsherba and the mainland of Tripoli, which certainly answers the descriptions of the ancients much better than the Sebcha Pharaon. Maltzan's view in regard to the connection of the inland sea with the Mediterranean is also contradicted by later investigators, such as Dr. Fuchs, who thinks it unlikely that this connection, if it ever existed in prehistoric times, can be assigned to this particular place north of Gabes.

However, these questions do not come within the sphere of this book. The Sebchas begin about thirteen English miles west of the Mediterranean coast, and extend over an area of about 12,000 English miles (according to Sir Richard Wood's calculation), as far as the south of Biskra. The Sebcha Pharaon is the basin farthest to the east, and is about sixty-five English miles long and twenty-five miles broad. The lake is dry during the greater part of the year, or at most covered with swamps coated with a thick layer of salt, deceiving enough to lure the unsuspecting traveller to his death. This cover-

ing of salt is never strong enough to bear, and many a Mecca pilgrim, and many a caravan which left the narrow road traversing this lake (dry to all appearance), has disappeared below. As to the project of inundating these Shotts, it seems, according to the latest investigations, a work of such difficulty, and connected with such enormous labour and cost, that it is likely to remain a project only for generations to come. It has been found that it would not be a question only of a canal thirteen miles long, but mountain chains would have to be cut, and canals dug of a length of sixty-six miles, to unite the Sebcha Pharaon with the other basins lying westward, a still heavier work, and more costly than the canal of Suez.

But suppose the capital could be found, and the work executed, what would be the advantage? In proportion to the very great disadvantages such a sea would occasion, the advantage would be very small, and soon another company might be started whose task it would be to stop the canal, to dry up again this newly-created sea. It was hoped that such a large area of water might moderate the temperature of the Northern Sahara, increase the rainfall, and create a new vegetation for the many steppes which now lie fallow. But the contrary would be the case. Tripoli and all the districts of North Africa as far as Egypt lie by the sea, and for hundreds of miles not a single tree is to be seen notwithstanding. The Red Sea, which is similar to the projected one, is surrounded by desert land, and even those parts of Tunis in the Shott region bordering on the sea, from Sfax down to Gabes and Sarsis, are only desert. The palms of the only oases

which are to be found in this desolate littoral—namely, Gabes and Sarsis—are, on account of an excess of humidity, uneatable. An artificially created inland sea would therefore be synonymous with the destruction of the date-harvest throughout the productive oases of the Dsherid. And even if this were not the case, no advantages would accrue to justify the spending of so many millions.

THE END.

[October, 1886.



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- yashmak  
hair  
ni'saii (clasp on shoes)  
tyiaour  
Turbouka (kind of drum)  
suk  
Anim (chief man of a bazaar)  
sheshin (fog)  
suk-el-Irba (women's bazaar)  
110 suk-el-Asr (afternoon vegetable market)  
Dshifa - bn. dshifa (دشیفہ بن دشیفہ) (cancer son of cancer)

